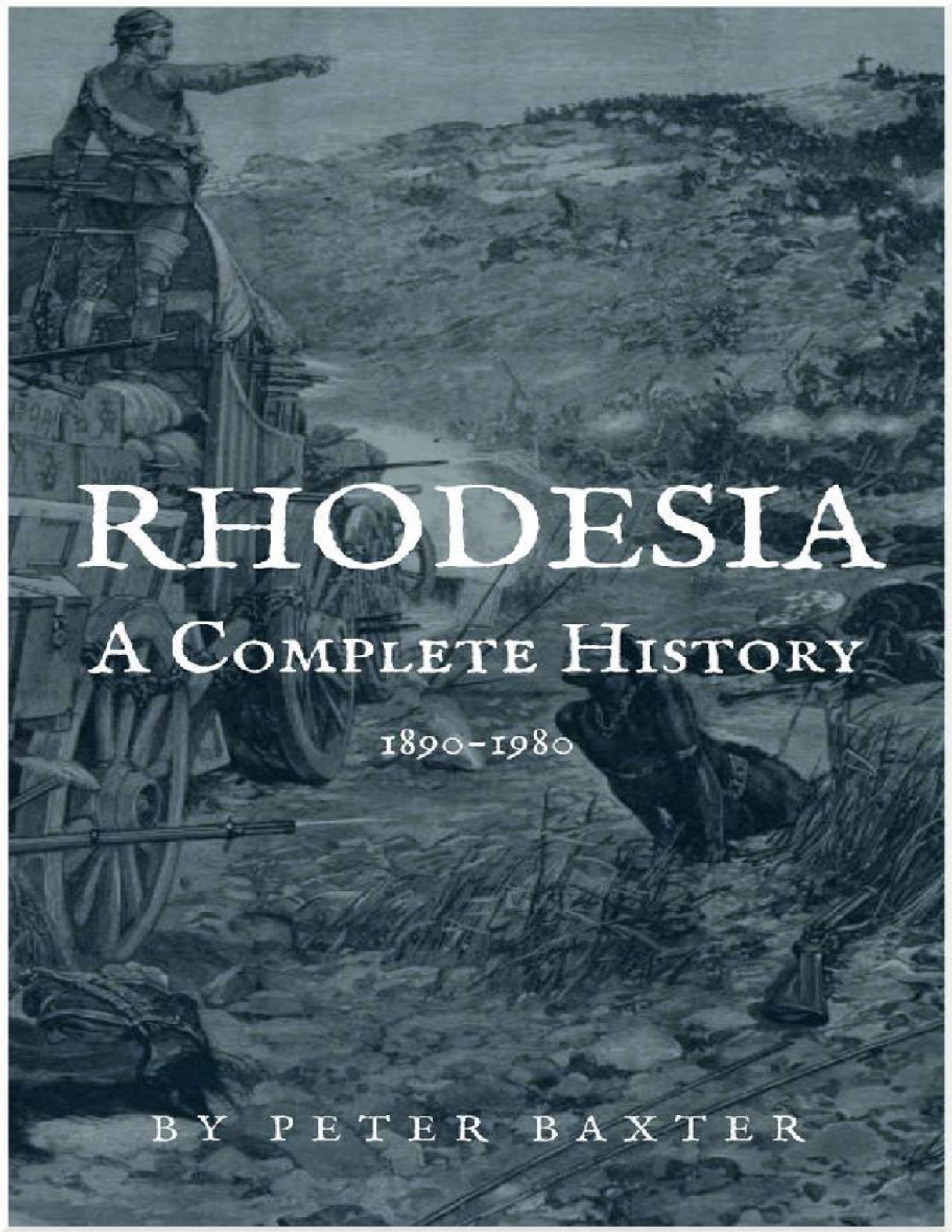

RHODESIA

A Complete History

1890-1980

BY PETER BAXTER

RHODESIA

By

Peter Baxter

Part I

Exploration & Exploitation

1890-1923

Remember that you are an Englishman, and have consequently won the First prize in the lottery of life…

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NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN RHODESIA

1
Portugal and the Mwene Mutapa

The MaShona are a more civilised and industrious tribe than these leonine mortals [The Ndebele] among whom I sojourn and are a very superior race – **Robert Moffat**

Doctor David Livingstone, the celebrated Scottish missionary and explorer, is the man most widely credited with the 'discovery' of the Victoria Falls. In the early 1850s, Livingstone explored the length of the Zambezi River in an extensive expedition that, although by contemporary standards was hardly the most rigorous, has since come to be regarded as one of the most iconic. Apart from the discovery of the falls themselves, Livingstone brought into the field of geographic knowledge much of the south-central interior of Africa, the virtual entirety of the Zambezi Valley, the Shire River and its tributaries and the last of the great lake formations of Africa. In memory of these enormous achievements, a large and heroic bronze statue of Livingstone stands adjacent to the Devil's Cataract in Zimbabwe. From there, with a proprietary air, Livingstone surveys the hinterland that he dared hope would one day come under the sway of Christianity and commerce.

However, Livingstone's were not the first cobbled boots to tread the dust of the great Zambezi Valley. Many others preceded him, but their names remain unrecognised, for they were Portuguese, not British, and quite often they were people of colour. Frequently too, their objectives were nefarious and secretive. By the time of Livingstone's arrival on the Zambezi, the territory of Portuguese East Africa was experiencing an economic resurgence based on the Indian Ocean slave trade, and as a consequence, many Portuguese explorers courted anonymity. However, even if they had not, it was the British who were at that point writing the history of Africa, and to the British, as events in the region would prove time and again, coming second did not always mean losing the race.

If Livingstone ever felt that there was any irregularity in his claims of *primus inter pares,* he tended to fortify himself with the thought that the Portuguese were by then a spent force on the global stage, and had no business leading an enlightened world in geographic discovery. With their greatest glories behind them, and wallowing in the moral decay and

the infamy of slavery, he dismissed them as "…an utterly effete, worn-out, used-up syphilitic race."

Whatever the moral consequences of Portuguese involvement in Africa, however, and as poor a record as they tended to have as civilisers and colonisers, it is nonetheless a tragedy that so many of their early explorations of the African interior went unrecorded. A century or more before the kindling of European enlightenment began to glow, it was Portuguese mariners who were testing the East African wind, and peering with curiosity into the dark and forbidding interior. Simple and often illiterate men – the scrapings of Lisbon's slums and gaols – spread out from coastal settlements and moved inland to map out the trade networks that would later establish Portuguese mercantile dominance.

In an attempt to vindicate Portuguese claims to much of the African interior, then being so imperiously tramped by Livingstone, nineteenth-century Portuguese scholar Don José de Lacerda produced extensive documentation to support his assertion that every discovery so far attributed to Livingstone belonged already to the Portuguese. Livingstone was by then well on the way to completing the first recorded crossing of the continent from west to east, a feat that de Lacerda claimed was accomplished half a century earlier by two Portuguese explorers, Pedro João Baptista and Amaro José, both men of mixed blood. Livingstone would soon afterwards proceed north to Lake Nyasa, where, once again according to de Lacerda, the Portuguese had been before.

Much of this was true, of course, but none of it was taken particularly seriously anywhere other than in Lisbon. The pioneering accomplishments of Livingstone, and accomplishments they undoubtedly were, were hailed throughout Britain and the English-speaking world, and to his name was attached the first claim to each one. And whatever the Portuguese might say about it, that record of achievement in exploration remains Livingstone's to this day.

The Portuguese chapter of the East African story begins in 1488 with one of a long sequence of great maritime achievements, in this case, the arrival at the Cape of Good Hope of a small flotilla of ships under the command of Bartolomeu Dias. Nine years later this momentous expedition was followed by a second, under the command of Vasco da Gama, who then continued around the Cape to become the first European to log a successful sea voyage to India.

As da Gama journeyed home along the East African coast, however, he was intrigued to observe a bustle of commercial activity under the broad control of Arab merchants and their local Swahili surrogates. The city-states of Mombasa, Malindi and Zanzibar dominated a network of settlements stretching from the Ilha de Moçambique to the coast of Somalia. At some point, da Gama happened upon the celebrated Arab navigator and cartographer Ibn Majid, who swept his arm up the length of the East African Coast, extolling its riches and beauty. Beauty, of course, was of little interest to da Gama, but fortunes certainly were.

Then, in the harbour of Zanzibar, da Gama discovered an established trading centre founded originally by ancient Assyrians centuries before the birth of Christ, with the first Arab traders making landfall on the island in about the 1st century AD. Seasonal trade winds linked this most southerly outpost with the rest of East Africa, the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia and China. Zanzibar Island itself was initially held to have no particular value other than as a sheltered harbour from which traders were ideally positioned to interact with the mainland. The 12th century saw the establishment of the main port settlement of Zanzibar Town, and a local hierarchy heavily flavoured by Islamic culture and religion. As da Gama's flotilla drifted into the harbour that day, his ships jostled among ranks of groaning dhows, owned by Arab and Swahili traders and serviced by black slaves of widely diverse origins.

Soon he began to hear tales of an empire of gold in the adjacent interior, and his interest which further provoked his interest. It was the gold of conquered kingdoms in the in the New World that catapulted Spain to global prominence, and da Gama was tempted to believe that this might be Portugal's moment of opportunity. With this news, he hurried home, and eight years later the first permanent Portuguese settlement on the East African coast was established. The site was an Arab trading village called Sofala, not far from the present day city of Beira, and probably founded sometime in the 9th century. There the Portuguese flag was hoisted, and a certain Francisco d'Almeida appointed the first official resident.

By 1505, the fort of *San Caetano* was completed, built from stone shipped from Portugal block by block as ballast in trading ships, and the basics of a permanent settlement established. One of the first tasks d'Almeida undertook was to assemble and despatch an expedition into the interior to search for the anticipated cities of gold, and thus it was that the

silent glories of the Portuguese infiltration into the East African interior began.

What was reported back some months later, when a weary and thoroughly depleted party of men returned to the coast, must have seemed almost too incredible to believe. The daily evidence of d'Almeida's eyes showed the natives of the coast to be an idle and indolent race, often weighed down by parasites and disease and increasingly tormented by the Slave Trade. To a European observer there was nothing about them that alluded to greatness, and yet the *exploradores* returned with excited accounts of an entirely different race of Africans. D'Almeida was tempted to believe, as many others have done since, that what his men had discovered in the interior was the progeny of a biblical migration, now settled on a landscape of fabulous wealth. Surely this was salvation for the long guttering flame of Portuguese imperial dignity.

In a way, d'Almeida and others who ascribed the achievements of the interior peoples to foreign influence were right. Although his men certainly had not stumbled upon King Solomon's Mines, the Kingdom of Prester John or the palace of the Queen of Sheba, they nonetheless encountered am ancient society born of a vast migration. Anthropologists and archaeologists today refer to this phenomenon as the *Bantu Expansion* or the *Bantu Migration*.

In anthropological terms, the word *Bantu* is an umbrella term that broadly defines the indigenous races of Africa that make up the bulk of its modern population. The word is a variant of *abaNtu,* meaning 'people' or 'the people', as an expression of humanness, humanity or simply being human. The name was first coined in this context by German linguist Wilhelm Bleek in his 1862 study *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, from where it has since entered the established lexicon of African anthropological study. Although the principle of the Bantu Migration is simple, it remains a contested theory rather than an established historical fact. The currently accepted hypothesis regarding the dispersal of the Bantu places the origins of the expansion in the broad region of the Niger Delta. The 'expansion', or outward migration from this region was driven primarily by the development of agriculture and ironwork, and the enhanced opportunities this presented. South and eastward migration brought about the gradual displacement of older, Neolithic populations that were well established south of the equator. By the beginning of the second

millennium CE, the Bantu Expansion reached, and then crossed the Zambezi River, entering for the first time the subject area of this narrative. With the arrival of the Bantu, this slumbering expanse of southern Africa awoke to the first breezes of a tempest that would soon follow.

The first to be buffeted by this gathering storm was the loose-knit communities of hunter-gatherers known as the *San*, who had until then enjoyed unchallenged mastery of their landscape. The San lived in unique harmony with that landscape and initially tried to foster the same relationship with the incoming Bantu. Before long, however, the superior organisation and technology of the latter succeeded in driving the San to the very extremities of viable existence. By the time of white occupation, these, the oldest inhabitants of the land, had effectively disappeared from the habitable areas of the central watershed in favour of the high mountains and deserts.

Today, the only visible remains of the San are cave and rock paintings scattered throughout south and central Africa. For reasons both spiritual and temporal, the San recorded an opus of these mural compositions, most minor, but some almost epic. From this record, archaeologists have been able to both plot the history of the San and the approximate dates of the first Bantu arrivals. It is noteworthy too that one particular sequence of paintings, discovered in present-day Zimbabwe, documents the first appearance of a horse-riding European. The artist who painted this scene must have been one of the very last of his kind.

In contrast to the San, the Bantu were social and political in outlook, and under the agreeable conditions of the central plateau, they settled and proliferated. In due course, a static and loosely confederated society began to form, as in the meanwhile the preponderance of the migration continued on to test the boundaries of infinity.

The momentum of the Migration was sustained primarily by pastoralism, and a system of shifting cultivation that was founded on the premise of limitless land. In such a state of grace, Bantu society displayed little of the aggression and violence that would later come to characterise it. As one generation settled, another would pass by and continue on. So long as nothing impeded this incremental movement, pressures on land and resources were rarely felt. The first arrivals were able to consolidate where and when they chose, as the remainder continued on. Before long, an organised community took root, and by the eleventh-century, exterior trade

had begun. This trade quickly gathered strength, and by the time the Portuguese began to investigate the interior, artefacts of Arab, Indian and Chinese manufacture were common. Agronomy developed to support interdependent communities, not as yet bonded into strong and chauvinistic groups. Between two rivers, and constrained by deserts and mountains, a unique and independent culture emerged.

The first to settle in the area were the twin groups of Tonga and Tavara. The next was the Rozvi, who established themselves in the southeast of the plateau. Behind them came the more numerous and dominant Karanga, who tended to be the binding agent of a cohesive culture. It is thought that the vital pillar of Karanga ascendancy was their adherence to the cult, or religion, of *Mwari*.

The details of indigenous history on the central plateau have been derived almost entirely from the oral record, augmented by ongoing archaeology. It is beyond the strict compass of this narrative to delve too deeply into all of this, and for the purpose, the myth might just as well marry with the facts. For example, it has been claimed that the origins of Mwari are Semitic. There certainly are other traces of Semitism in southern Africa, so this claim is not in any way unprecedented. The general view of what Mwari represents is not that dissimilar to *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. To his devotees, Mwari was, and remains, the one God, available for consultation and prayer, but known only to an exclusive class of acolytes upon whose interpretations the common man relies.

As has been common throughout history, god and king might also at times merge, and the king, whoever he might be, is then regarded as the head of the church, and a divine representative on earth. Even in recent times, when being sworn in at a court of law, blacks always swore to Mwari as the deity, although their hand would rest on a bible, and the Christian god was naturally implied.

However, let us return now to those Portuguese traders on the east coast and their engagement with the tribes of the interior. One of the oldest and most iconic national monuments in Zimbabwe is the Great Zimbabwe Ruins. In the year 1531, the captain of the Sofala garrison, Vicente Pegado, wrote of a fortress in the interior, built of stones, of unusual size and with a tower of more than twelve fathoms. This he called *Symbaoe*, presumably according to his interpretation of the name that he was given by the natives. Zimbabwe has been described as meaning the ‘burial place of kings’, but

more likely it was derived from the Karanga *ziimba remabwe*, or *ziimba rebwe*, meaning the 'Great House of Stone'. This interpretation would certainly describe a place that is in itself a powerful evidentiary symbol of local social and political accomplishment. It served from the eleventh-century onwards as the central shrine and capital of the emerging tribal confederation. Its construction was conceived by visionary architects, and it was built over a period of about 400-years.

Great Zimbabwe was the successor of a much older site of similar construction called *Mapungubwe*, located on the northern frontier of South Africa. Mapungubwe was probably the first of the city-states to develop on the basis of extensive trade arteries that reached as far eastward, down the valley of the Limpopo, as the East African coast. Mapungubwe significantly influenced the later development of Khami Ruins in Matabeleland, and then Great Zimbabwe itself as centres of power and trade. The ruling 'Mambo' drew his strength from his divinity, and his position was supported by a potent religious theocracy that played an additional secular function as advisors to the king, bureaucrats, spies and informers. These mediums were usually ordinary men or women who by some means had been possessed by the spirits of the clan elders.

Much of the ability of the various Bantu groups to survive and proliferate came with skills in mining and forging iron, copper and gold, all of which played a significant part in the subsequent development of trade. The introduction by the Portuguese of food-crops such as maize and sweet potatoes added to the agricultural potential of the landscape, which in turn made possible sharp increases in levels of population. It was the discovery of gold, however, that really set the pot of trade boiling, after which the real wealth of the Kingdom began to accumulate.

At that moment, however, the kingdom existed as little more than a loose confederation of independent chieftainships, and the 'Mambo' himself merely a high priest. The story of how it all developed into the powerful confederation that the Portuguese discovered is told in the parable of salt. In fact, it is a little more than a parable, although not quite reliable history, and it might perhaps be best thought of as a genesis tale.

Nevertheless, salt was perennially scarce on the plateau, and typically it was reduced from the ashes of certain plants, and in some cases animal dung. The story then goes that in the mid-15th century, the Mambo Mutota, or Nyatsimba Mutota, upon receiving word that the Arabs had

begun trading salt up the Zambezi Valley, remarked to his people that henceforth they could stop eating 'shit'.

An army was formed, and a campaign mounted on the tribes of the Zambezi Valley. These submitted readily to conquest, and admiring the vigour that inhabited this great king from the south, they offered up the name *Mwene Mutapa* or the *Great Pillager*. There are as many indigenous variations on this name as there are translations, and Mwene Mutapa has been variously transcribed as *Monomotapa*, *Munhumutapa, Mwenemutara* or *Mwene we Mutapa,* but often just the Kingdom of *Mutapa,* its accepted English interpretation being 'The Prince of Conquered Lands'.

Mutota was impressed, of course, and in this, he was not alone. The Mambo now transmogrified from a mere religious figurehead to an authentic paramount, and around this new title formed a dynasty. By the death of Matope, Mutota's son and heir, the dominion of the Mutapa extended over the entire north and northwest three-quarters of present-day Zimbabwe, as well as over a significant stretch of the coastal belt of what is now Mozambique. This was an enormous domain, constructed during one of those gifted human epochs of genius and leadership, and a collision of circumstances that hovered for a brief moment upon the zenith of human brilliance.

Practically, the kingdom functioned primarily as a confederation, with individual chiefs and headmen owning considerable local power and influence, but owing fealty to a paramount. Power was buttressed by a central army under the command of the Mambo, but comprising levies imposed on individual tribes and clans. The strength and weakness of central authority can be gauged by the degree of peace or unrest in the land, and although periodic rebellions did take place, they were rare and did not tend to destabilise the whole.

This was the case with the development of the Changamire dynasty, which would rise at a later point, but for the time being remained a semi-independent unit of the Mwene Mutapa. According to, among others, the nineteenth-century South African historian George McCall Theal, during the Matope period, Changa, an illegitimate son of the Mambo, was awarded the governorship of a district occupied by a large and powerful clan, the Rozvi. Changa developed a power base of his own, from where he and his successors waited for the right moment to act. Although it is uncertain exactly when, the Changa line adopted the Arab honorific 'Emire', and the

name of the dynasty was after that adapted to ‘Changamire’. Under Changamire Dombo, the Rozvi would eventually achieve independence from the Mutapa.

This, however, lay some distance in the future. For the time being, the kingdom grew and thrived. Many historians, George Theal among them, have made the observation that for a brief moment, the Bantu race was released from its stifling orthodoxy that, and for many more years would characterise Bantu life. Ideas circulated freely, and at about the same time as the English King John was being forced to sign the Magna Carta, a degree of individual human liberty had become enshrined in a centralised doctrine under the rule of the Mambos. The idea of private property became general, along with the right to independently trade, and retain wealth and property over successive generations. This allowed for an accumulation beyond the usual currency of women, children and livestock.

It is, of course, possible that Theal and others since have overstated this, but unlikely that they have been entirely misled. The weakness of the system, of course, lay in the fact that no written language existed to codify it, and it survived only as a collective state of mind, and as such it could endure just so long as peace and plenty prevailed.

Bearing in mind that few Portuguese would have ever seen a black man not either enslaved or broken down in some way by contact with themselves, stories describing this extraordinary kingdom that drifted in from the interior must have seemed fantastic at the very least. Nonetheless, the finesse of religious practice, the practicality and effectiveness of political administration, the pleasantness of language and general deportment, were all subjects of lavish Portuguese praise. Since those times, of course, archaeologists and historians have unearthed ample evidence to support those early impressions. Imported items from across the Middle and the Far East appeared in the form of beautiful ceramics from Asia, Persian rugs from the Gulf as well as glass beads and porcelain from as far afield as Gujarat and China. A royal household was run on extravagant lines. A ruler might move through his day to day affairs with as many as sixty attendants, and a seraglio of anything up to 3,000 wives. Militarily, the kingdom at its peak could put into the field an army of upwards of 100,000 men, more significant than even the accumulated military might of the Zulus.

However, by the close of the fifteenth century, as the Portuguese were poised to step onto the stage, some of the usual indications of end of

empire began to find a way into the stitch of the imperial cloth. The most damaging of these was the customary rot of a disputed succession, alongside an ageing dynasty and an inevitable and general complacency. Diminishing of gold reserves, the depletion of elephants on the plateau and a curious reluctance on the part of the kingdom to capitalise on the lucrative trade in slaves, all tended to contribute to a slow but steady decline.

This process continued as a succession of weak Mwene Mutapa ascended and were then toppled from the throne. This, in turn, permitted the rise of the Rozvi in the south, comprising a number of allied maShona states, and under the leadership of Dombo Changamire, creating not a resurgence Mutapa, but the competing dynasty of Changamire. The minutia of this processes and its cause and effect are probably beyond the scope of this history, but suffice to say that, although the seat of the Mwene Mutapa was weakened, it was not destroyed. Each side after that glared at the other over a parapet of mutual hostility, neither caring to acknowledge the truth of their mutual decline. And such was the state of indigenous society above the Zambezi Escarpment as the Portuguese arrived to add their influence to the picture. The wealth was still evident, of course, but the power was in decline. Gold was the incentive and guns the medium. The Portuguese had the latter and desired the former, and what followed was, therefore, somewhat inevitable.

When word of all this reached Lisbon, the interest of a rather famished and declining monarchy was piqued. Although in 1500, Portugal staked its claim to Brazil, the easy pickings of Spanish Central America were absent. In East Africa, on the other hand, apart from the Arabs, no other foreign nation had so far staked any claim at all, and if carefully exploited, this could be the opportunity that the sick man of Europe needed to realise his destiny.

The Church, however, was quicker off the blocks than the State, for Africa could be relied upon to be as abundant in pagan souls as gold and silver. Thus, a Jesuit priest by the name of Father Dom Gonçalo da Silveira arrived at the East African Port of Inhambane some years in advance of the first official expedition. He was the first Christian missionary to approach the seat of the Mwene Mutapa, and in 1561, recorded his first triumph in baptising the incumbent Mambo, his mother and several other high ranking members of the aristocracy. This victory, however, was perhaps less one of the spirit than the diplomacy of court, and the exaggerated promise of the

patronage of a European power. It was not long, however, before a combination of popular conservatism, suspicion and Arab intrigue brought about Father da Silveira's demise. He was murdered on 6 March 1561, and his body dumped in the Musengezi River. Within a few months, news of this martyrdom at the hands of 'Arabs' reached Lisbon, provoking, at last, the Crown to act.

The death of Father Dom Gonçalo da Silveira galvanised the Portuguese public into frenzied demands for a crusade. Obviously, popular perceptions of what the Mwene Mutapa was were vague at best, and tailored to appeal to a slavishly religious population. Contemporary etchings of Father da Silveira's martyrdom place the setting in fields of classical architecture with men of medieval appearance garrotting a faithful Christian. The incident stirred the type of visceral reaction that might transcend mere commercial adventure, and the matter soon transcended to one of national and ecclesiastical prestige.

An expedition was therefore assembled, but although passionately hailed, it proved, in the end, to be rather slow to get off the ground. Not until 1569, a full eight years after the death of Father da Silveira, did it finally set sail, and not until November 1571 did it arrive off the shores of East Africa. A base was established at the trade settlement of Senna, at the mouth of the Zambezi River, perhaps one of the most prolific corners of southern Africa for the deadly anopheles mosquito, and precisely as the annual rains settled in, an attack up-river was planned.

It certainly must have been a very curious sight for the tribes of the Zambezi to behold a body of sweating and feverish white men, marching resolutely up the rugged valley in their polished mail and armour, and in their midst, heavy artillery pieces and streaming standards. Although relatively few in number, these men clearly marched with intent. The tribes duly formed up in their traditional battle lines, but they were cut down in droves as muskets and grapeshot were brought to bear. After a short and rather one-sided battle, they melted away into the forests of the valley floor, leaving the Portuguese free to occupy the chief kraals, and for what it was worth, to consolidate their conquest.

In battle, the Portuguese suffered minimal losses, but soon afterwards the expedition found itself succumbing to enemies against which it had no defence. Malaria, blackwater fever and other diseases began killing off men at an unsustainable rate. The survivors were eventually

faced with little choice but to retreat back towards the hardly less foetid Zambezi mouth.

It must have come as a considerable relief then, for the Portuguese commanders to be met in Senna by a delegation from the Mwene Mutapa, anxious to discuss terms of peace. However, malaria would be to the Portuguese what the Russian winter was to Napoleon, and the expeditionary force was slowly decimated by waves of fever, and inevitably, internal dissent and poor leadership saw the expedition crumble.

This expedition, as futile and demonstrative as it was, nonetheless paved the way for a more considered diplomatic approach to the tribes of the interior. A veteran of the ill-fated military incursion, a certain Fernandes Homen, decided to abandon the feverish gateway of the Zambezi and to approach the central plateau instead directly east from the settlement at Sofala. By this route, he was not long in reaching the clean embraces of the escarpment, and the feverless high-country beyond.

While this expedition lacked the forlorn pageantry of its predecessor, it did mark a trend that in future would far exceed the bounty achieved by military conquest. This was the establishment of a network of trade treaties and contracts with tribal groupings all along the fringe of the Mwene Mutapa Empire. These were often groups that only nominally owed allegiance to the monarchy, and were thus easily persuaded to ally themselves with a new and exciting power on the coast. Trade, of course, was brisk, and wealth began to circulate until in due course Portuguese diplomacy permeated like an infarction to the very heart of the crumbling Mwene Mutapa Kingdom.

These positive events in East Africa, however, were soon to be compromised by the greatest Portuguese national embarrassment of all time. In 1578 a youthful King Sebastian led a military campaign to seize Morocco and was so utterly defeated that it is conceivable that Portugal never recovered. Apart from the king's own death or capture, this catastrophic reversal ensured that the days of grand intervention overseas were abruptly brought to an end. Just when dividends might have been expected to flow from the lives and revenue so far invested, Portuguese power in east and central Africa crumbled. The impetus for exploration and exploitation was taken out of the hands of agents of the Crown and largely given over to a new class of colonialist known as *Praziero*.

These Praziero were a breed of independent trader barons created from the network of earlier treaty gatherers who built the economic empire of Portuguese East Africa. Some evolved into freebooters of great personal means and consequence, while others simply lapsed into assimilation, and established *mulatto* chieftainships barely distinguishable from the natives. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a few Praziero controlled vast and almost entirely autonomous fiefdoms, proliferating mainly in the Zambezi Valley, and owing no significant allegiance to either the colonial or the metropolitan government.

As the Praziero proliferated, some acquired a grim reputation. These were mainly working-class men or criminals who were given ‘leases’ over substantial territorial concessions and charged with the task of creating enterprise. Usually, this enterprise consisted of harvesting the readily available manpower and selling it off on the East African slave market. After the abolition of the slave trade, this practice shifted only slightly into a system of centrally traded bonded labour.

However, while the Portuguese presence on the plateau fell short of comprehensive occupation, their gradual insinuation into the community resulted in an ever-growing dependence on them on the part of the Mwene Mutapa. Among other services, the Portuguese provided armed assistance during one or other internal upheaval and artificial protection. In exchange, the Praziero were permitted to charge their own taxes, take over the operations of mines, raise their private armed levies and live in almost every respect as native chiefs.

The Portuguese also held regular trade markets where goods were bought, sold and dispatched. It is estimated that by 1596 upwards of 500 Portuguese Praziero and traders were active in the Mwene Mutapa Kingdom, the largest and most established centre of which was Dambarare, situated just north of modern-day Mazowe. It might be added that the gathering empire of the Urozvi suffered little if any intrusion by the Portuguese, for although substantial gold deposits existed in the southeast, this fact remained unknown to the Portuguese until it was too late for the resource to be fully exploited.

By the reign of the indolent and corrupt Mwene Mutapa Gatsi Ruseri, between 1589 and 1623, the stage was more or less set for the end of the empire. The Portuguese had already loosened the ancient bonds of the Confederacy, and sensing a decline, the Urozvi paramountcy intensified

its pressure. Gatsi Ruseri, acknowledging that his situation had become too perilous to be sustained, handed himself, his office and his entire domain to the Portuguese in exchange for their protection.

In 1610, a limited rebellion broke out against this Portuguese predominance, which was mainly fomented by the Urozvi. In the face of this insurrection, the Portuguese temporarily retreated, most seeking brief refuge in the settled areas at the mouth of the Zambezi River, but it was not long before they returned. A strong Portuguese counter-attack routed small rebel units and re-imposed general control. The Portuguese then installed a puppet Mwene Mutapa in the traditional seat of Chitake. Although they regaled him with European honours, he was confined under guard, afforded no authority and allowed to move freely only in a small area.

In the meanwhile new and elaborate plans were formed in Portugal for the active colonisation of the central plateau. Initial economic enterprise had so far proved lucrative, while the Catholic Church pioneered settlement. In the end, however, these plans were never realised. Global events and the profound reverses suffered in Portugal cut the ground out from under the feet of those early and stalwart colonists. Resources were gradually diverted from East Africa to such diverse locations as India and Brazil. In Portuguese East Africa, as the territory came to be known, activities of the colonists tended to be confined to the port cities and the immediate hinterland. The greatest Portuguese contribution to Africa turned out to be the humble imports of sweet potatoes and maize from South America, thanks to which the massive population explosion of the colonial period was made possible.

The Portuguese Crown, in the meanwhile, watched in disappointment as, in 1652, a Hollander by the name of Jan van Riebeek landed a small flotilla at the Cape of Good Hope. The regions of the Cape and Natal had until then only vaguely figured in Portuguese plans for the future, but with the arrival of the Dutch, the moment was lost.

By the time the Portuguese withdrew entirely from the central plateau, the ancient kingdom of the Mwene Mutapa had itself withered to a shadow of its former brilliance. The value of trade from the interior to the Indian Ocean diminished as the reserves of gold and ivory were depleted, although this was not by any means the only reason. As we have heard, the rulers of the central plateau also curiously failed to exploit the Indian Ocean slave trade, which was a significant economic factor to the north and east,

and which was indeed worth more than gold. This economic decline precipitated a corresponding social decay, and the influence of the Portuguese gradually diminished to an ancient memory, and little of the past magnificence remained.

The dynasty, however, survived for many years, with the last of the Mambos dying only in 1902. By the time of the arrival of the next wave of European colonists, however, almost no visible traces remained of what had once been a vast empire. It was as if a curtain fell, and as the audience drifted out of the auditorium, the actors quietly packed up and left the stage. After the withdrawal of the Portuguese, another century would pass before events of any consequence would shed new light on the life of the central plateau. By then the social and moral advances of Mwene Mutapa had been forgotten, and Bantu life had returned to the moderating orthodoxy of old.

As the years slipped by, the heirs of Mwene Mutapa lost all power and aspiration to rule and were gradually subjected to the Urozvi. With neither challenge nor contest, the authority of the Rozvi also atrophied, and in due course, they too became a ruling caste of indolent and effete aristocrats. They existed mainly on the impotence of their subjects, and a claim to cult ascendancy. To this, no significant challenge appears to have been mounted, and the population of the central plateau quietly waited in a state of nervous suspension for the next great chapter of change to overtake their history.

2
The Genesis of the amaNdebele

The AmaNdebele had previously led a better life, if it is good for anyone to live the life of a magnificent brigand – **Robert Tredgold**

Almost at the moment that the Bantu Migration reached its conclusion, an age of great turmoil and suffering replaced the relative peace of centuries past. Unsurprisingly, the day came when the great movement was halted, setting in motion a process of violent upheaval and change. In time this brought about the phenomenon of the *Mfecane*, or the *Difecane*, one of the first of the great humanitarian tragedies to blight the region in the modern age.

The agency that arrested the Bantu Migration was not, as one might suppose, the end of the African land mass, but the boundaries of white expansion that followed the Dutch occupation of 1652. The cause and effect of these events tend now to enter a region of divergent memory, so at its most fundamental, the story tells of Dutch-speaking settlers expanding outwards from the confines of the original settlement of Cape Town, which was established as a private venture on behalf of the Dutch East India Company. An independence of mind began to develop on the frontier, encouraging a nomadic lifestyle and a somewhat exaggerated sense of manifest destiny. In due course, the European population of the Cape was augmented by the arrival of fresh waves of Dutch and French Huguenot religious exiles, all of whom, in combination, commenced the genesis of what would in due course become the Afrikaner nation.

Fortified by gunpowder, and buttressed by concentrated Calvinism, those now styling themselves the ‘Boer’ succeeded in expanding their occupation all the way to the banks of the Great Fish River. There they began to confront what might simplistically be regarded as the vanguard of the Bantu Migration, which they looked upon as something of a biblical plague. Old testament doctrine convinced them that blacks were the Canaanites, whom the people of Israel had God-given license to vanquish. To the Boer, this was *their* promised land, and the symbolic parallels after that are hardly difficult to recognise.

This was the onset of what came to be known as the ‘Frontier Wars’, a series of conflicts that simmered on the eastern frontier of the Cape

Colony for upwards of a century. Historians describing the effect of this collision between two equally conservative cultures have often drawn on the simple analogy of a breaking wave, which is a convenient way to simplify a highly sophisticated human, mercantile and natural collision. Channelled by the Drakensberg Mountains, the southward-flowing human wave of the Migration quickened its pace, one part entering the central region, and the other pressed down the narrow coastal plain of Natal. Soon enough, this wave broke against a sea-wall of white occupation. The tide then turned back on itself, fermenting a process of rapid political and social crystallisation, among a people of otherwise borderless and free-roaming habits. Independent family and clan units began to merge into tribal confederations, to mount credible defences against other similarly forming coalitions. As populations burgeoned, complex pressures created a powerful backwash, and tensions steadily mounted. Ever more desperate bickering and jostling began to build the alchemy of a firestorm that needed only a spark of strong leadership to ignite it.

That spark came in the form of the young bastard child of a petty chieftain, a black Caesar who rose to create a martial cult with perhaps no parallel in African history. The story of Shaka and the Zulu nation is long, convoluted and fascinating, but unfortunately, it falls outside the strict scope of this narrative, and we must sadly be content to summarise. It is, in fact, important only insofar as it affected political events north of the Limpopo some half a century later.

However, it need be said that Shaka Zulu was born into a society galvanised by the events described above. He possessed the common personality defects of great leadership, whereby he tolerated no moderation and foreswore all humanity. Cruelty and paranoia, combined with charisma and intelligence, created a despot both dreadful and magnificent. Whatever else he might have been, Shaka was moulded in perfect symmetry to his times and was constituted in mind and body perfectly to forge and shape the destiny of a nervous land.

However, what was probably most remarkable about Shaka was his development and use of military tactics entirely revolutionary for his times. Refining a somewhat haphazard system of indigenous warfare, he introduced Roman-like concepts of assault weaponry, disciplined manoeuvre and tactics. Against this kind of advanced military innovation, there was at that time, and in that place, very little to answer. Thus began a

process of natural selection that to this day has left the legacy of a stern, intractable and courageous people.

Shaka instituted a reign of terror on the littoral of Natal that in due course spilt over to consume the Basuto tribes of the interior. Conquest and counter-conquest, relocation and dislocation, all combined in a conflagration that raged across the sub-region, and became known as the *Mfecane*, or the 'Burning'. The effect of the Mfecane and the predations of the Zulu was waves of traumatised refugees who, in no small extent, reversed the flow of the Bantu Migration. This time, however, the disturbed tribes found not empty and inviting lands, but country already occupied. The skills of Zulu warfare often learned by default then became applied in a cycle of ongoing slaughter and expulsion. Thus was created a domino effect that spread across the highveld like a firestorm, leaving in its wake utter desolation.

Three new Bantu groups were forged in this fire. These were the amaNdebele, the Ngoni and the Shangaan. Again, a fascinating tale remains to be told of the path that these three new nations carved in their flight from the Zulu menace, but it was the amaNdebele that would most profoundly affect the political direction of the Trans-Limpopo territories. In fleeing the Zulu, the first two groups moved north through Swaziland, the Shangaan eventually to settle uneasily in the Gaza region of southern Mozambique, and the Ngoni in the lakes region of Nyasaland.

Of the various leaderships, Mzilikazi of the amaNdebele was, without a doubt, the most competent and impressive, and also the most storied and charismatic. He began his career as a favoured general of Shaka, commanding the regiments of the Kumalo clan. He was personally acquainted with Shaka and had been an astute student of his ideology and methods. In return, he was favoured with a rare degree of patronage. The rupture came when Mzilikazi, on returning from a particular campaign, decided not to relinquish captured cattle to Shaka, as was required by law and protocol. With due regard to Mzilikazi's favoured status, Shaka sent a group of emissaries to enquire politely after the oversight. The messengers were shorn of their ceremonial accoutrements and sent back to the king empty-handed. Shaka is said to have lamented:

"Ho! My child has voided his diarrhoea on me!"

Before the inevitable bloody storm overtook him, Mzilikazi evacuated his clan, fleeing northwest by a winding route into the vicinity of

present-day Gauteng, where for a short while he settled. With a degree of ruthlessness and cruelty that would become his signature, Mzilikazi carved his own path of blood through the already devastated countryside, assimilating as he did so numbers of related Swazi and Basuto tribesmen, establishing the nucleus of a new nation. In time the amaNdebele grew to become a significant force in southern Africa.

For the time being, however, the amaNdebele remained a fugitive people. Shaka and more importantly his successor Dingane could not be seen to sanction secession, and the Zulus made a few stern attempts to bring the amaNdebele to heel and to punish Mzilikazi personally. Although ultimately unsuccessful, punishing campaigns were fought between the two nations that served to keep the amaNdebele in a semi-nomadic state. No sooner, however, had Mzilikazi placed enough distance between he and Dingane to feel safe than he ran into the northwards ambulating Boer. The 'Great Trek' was reaching its climax.

The Great Trek was the evacuation of an element of the Boer community angered and frustrated by the British takeover of the Cape. These were the Voortrekkers, the pioneers of Afrikanerdom, and the bedrock of their mythology has long been the terrible defeats that they inflicted on the native rulers of the hinterland. Although these clashes of spear and powder had an inevitable outcome, from such rites of fire as these, the Boers were tempered.

The amaNdebele people were defeated, and driven by the Boer across the Limpopo River, arriving in the present-day Matabeleland South province of Zimbabwe sometime during 1838/9. There they found the manna of their dreams in a beautiful and unpopulated realm. The land, however, was, of course, not entirely unpopulated, for here dwelt the orphans of the Mwene Mutapa.

These were men soon to be styled the *maShona*, a name derived from the amaNdebele word *itshonalanga*, or 'where the sun sets'. To the amaNdebele, the MaShona, in respect of prior occupation, were irrelevant. Although numerous, they were politically disunited, formed up under various paramountcies, but ultimately confederated, and no match for a military caste under the command of an absolute monarch of the statue of Mzilikazi. In fact, Mzilikazi was not the first military adventurer to investigate the central plateau, and indeed, very bad things had recently been happening to the maShona.

The long decline of the previous century ended abruptly one day. The runaway cult of militarism that had gripped the south broke over the horizon and arrived on the central plateau bringing horror and catastrophe in its wake. With a degree of force and violence never before known, the population of Mashonaland was attacked and decimated. First, it was Zwangendaba, with his now swollen and confident army of Ngoni warriors who surged up the Save Valley from Gaza, looking for spoils and plunder. Here they found plenty of both. Later the Shangaan would follow and do precisely the same. And so it was that, when the amaNdebele made their appearance, the maShona had been softened up and ripe for a regime of systematic abuse and exploitation. While his two predecessors played small and sporadic roles in the future of what would one day become Zimbabwe, Mzilikazi and his amaNdebele remained to scar and shape the country up to this day, and beyond.

The relationship between the amaNdebele and the maShona has, throughout its duration, been guarded, and abounding in suspicion and violence. When Mzilikazi formalised his occupation of Matabeleland, he found for once that no war of conquest was necessary. With the general exception of the religious hierarchy, he subjected the population to the most consistently brutal usage any African tyranny had so far devised.

Mzilikazi has been variously described as an awful despot of matchless cruelty, and a man of subtle wit and deep sensitivity, with an occasional tendency towards both humour and kindness. Such dichotomies are not unusual in great leaders. Regarding his qualities of both ruthlessness and humanity, Mzilikazi can only be judged against the standard of his times. Then, as now, empires formed and sustained by the force of an individual personality burn bright, but briefly. Rarely is there time for statutes or traditions of government to develop, and even less for them to be passed on, sanctified or recorded.

Despite this, the amaNdebele did develop an effective system of administration, based on the predominance of the military. Under this code, large areas of land were ceded to the control of generals, known as *indunas*, and centred on military garrisons occupied by a particular regiment. While decentralisation allowed for better government, it also exposed the centre to the risk of localised loyalties. To this Mzilikazi responded by deploying his extensive household of wives to various outlying garrisons where they were able to test the wind for traces of insurrection. It goes without saying that

for any instance o treason, real or perceived, the punishment would be swift and severe.

Thus Mzilikazi established the boundaries of his new kingdom. It was buttressed in the west by the Kalahari, to the north by the Zambezi River, to the south by the Limpopo River and in the east by the Portuguese. He then set about solving the fundamental problem that many others like him have faced in the past. He had bonded a nation under the trials of exodus, and many wars of accumulation and survival, but at peace, he found that he could not maintain an army in idleness, and here it is precisely that the maShona discovered their relevance in the new order. With the arrival of the amaNdebele, the maShona were handed the role of spear fodder for Mzilikazi's impis, and for the next sixty years, they existed at the sharp end of the amaNdebele *assegai*.

Contemporary observations give us a reasonably clear idea of how the subjugation of the maShona went. The amaNdebele economy was uncomplicated and based on the husbandry of cattle and any unfortunate neighbours less warlike than themselves. The striking difference between these two systems of stock management was that cattle were nurtured and humanely treated, while human chattel was used and butchered in the most cynical and inhumane manner imaginable.

Winter on the central plateau was the raiding season, and the reason for this was twofold. In the first instance, weather conditions were cool and dry, and so conducive to the rapid movement of manpower, and secondly, because the maShona would by then have brought in their annual harvest, and their grain reserves would be conveniently stored in standing granaries. Mzilikazi, at the annual 'Festival of the First Fruits', would hurl a spear in a predetermined direction, and thus launch on the maShona settlements thereabouts a tornado of death and destruction.

Recent scholarship has suggested that the character of this system of annual raiding was less concentrated and haphazard than has traditionally been assumed. Only selected regions were singled out for raiding, but these, on the whole, were those lying outside direct amaNdebele control. The political organisation of the maShona was decentralised, with petty chieftainships existing under paramount chiefs whose authority was limited and very loosely defined. Tribal groupings could coalesce for reasons of defence, for example, but in general, there

was a strong resistance to the type of rigid and centralised authority that governed the amaNdebele.

The assumption, therefore, that the amaNdebele enjoyed absolute military dominance was not always accurate, and some reverses against the maShona in battle have been recorded. Quite often, so long as tribute was regularly given, peace prevailed, although on the whole, like their Zulu forbears, the amaNdebele remained a military society primarily, and few were the inhabitants of the central plateau who did not in some way feel the weight of their arrival.

Thus, by various means, a sustainable programme of support came into being that allowed the amaNdebele nation to maintain its military establishment, and yet still grow fat on the land. Recent studies of the amaNdebele, however, also point to this moment as the beginning of a decline of their military prowess. The first European encounters with the amaNdebele created a picture of the noble savage that conformed very much to the contemporary ideal. The rigid military organisation and the emphasis on form and manoeuvre tended to offer an exaggerated sense of amaNdebele capability, and indeed under Mzilikazi's early leadership this was true, but when confronted by an enemy so lacking in military capability as the maShona, it is inevitable that the battle readiness of this once great army would diminish.

The effect of all of this on the maShona was nonetheless profound. The language group as a whole was largely kept on the back foot, able at the very most to maintain a fragmented sense of political unity. Except in the rarest of instances, any direct defence against an amaNdebele raid was unimaginable, so vulnerable communities tended to seek the cover of the broken hill country, from where a close vigil could be kept. AmaNdebele attacks, however, were usually swift, silent and unexpected, and mostly, although not always, successful. At their most extreme, all men of productive age and the elderly were slaughtered, and young women and children carried off in the first instance to portage the booty of war, and later to be murdered or claimed as booty themselves.

Those returned as slaves were often inducted into the amaNdebele society, and in due course, they became known as *amaHoli*. Within a generation, the amaHoli had become the bedrock of the military, and although their regiments tended to be poorly regarded, they were

nonetheless vital to the survival of the nation, eventually outnumbering the higher and older classes of Nguni and Basuto.

This, then, was the pattern of things. First the Ngoni, then the Shangaan and finally the amaNdebele, who settled and made good on the land. From that great culture that had once so impressed the Arabs and the Portuguese almost nothing remained. In the face of ongoing predation, and under the weight of their own natural decline, all nobility and grandeur were bred out of the race, to be replaced by traits of guile, evasiveness, cunning and dishonesty. This further inspired in the amaNdebele a bitter contempt for their neighbours, whom at the time they referred as *amaTswina*, translated loosely as filth, or 'shit'.

Such was the state of things as the 19th century approached the end of its third quarter. Secure in his new domain, Mzilikazi's chief concern became merely to keep the European expansion south of the Limpopo River and to preserve the integrity of his rule. He had seen for himself the power of guns, and he was both fearful and suspicious. There were, however, one or two notable exceptions to this, and one such was Robert Moffat, a Scottish missionary, explorer and sometime diplomat who became a close and personal friend to Mzilikazi. In one of the stranger incongruities of the times, it seems that the amaNdebele king had a great and genuine affection for this salty old missionary, whom he first met during his occupation of the region north of the Vaal River. It is debatable, however, whether Moffat shared this affection, and in fact, most of his journals betray a revulsion towards Mzilikazi's methods of conquest and rule. This relationship would nonetheless prove to be historically important and would have a significant bearing on the eventual European entry into Matabeleland.

Besides his dealings with Moffat, Mzilikazi tolerated a certain amount of carefully controlled trade in ivory and gold and even allowed one or two prospectors and hunters access to roam the country at will, albeit accompanied at all times by an official escort. On the whole, however, Mzilikazi did not welcome the white man into Matabeleland, and although aware of the necessity of maintaining peaceful relations with the white authorities south of the Limpopo, he denied access to a majority of those whites that sought it.

As he grew older, however, and subsided into alcoholism, dropsy and melancholia, he found it increasingly difficult to ward off the persistent attentions of European hunters, prospectors and explorers. Andries

Potgieter, a Boer commando and trek leader, even attempted an armed raid into Matabeleland, which, although it achieved nothing in military terms, nonetheless served clear notice on Mzilikazi that the white man was a fact of life, and would one day require accommodation.

In a way, Mzilikazi was fortunate, for he was the last of his kind. His life and the vast permutations of white interest and expansion underway in Africa did not fatally overlap. It was to his son and heir, Lobengula, that the distressing responsibility of confronting white encroachment would fall. Some years would pass before that day came, but come it would.

3
The Rise of the Diamond King

In the opinion of many people, Mr Rhodes is South Africa; others think he is only a large part of it – **Mark Twain.**

The death of David Livingstone in 1873 marked the end of the age of African exploration and the commencement of the imperial era. By then, most of the more significant geographic questions of the period had been answered, and the continent was largely mapped and understood. The British, of course, had led this effort, so naturally, it would be to them that the lion's share of Africa would fall. South Africa was the jewel in the African crown, by dint of both its strategic location and a climate ideally suited to long-term white settlement. The riches that at one time flooded into the coffers of Liverpool and Whitehall were drawn mainly from the Gold and Slave Coasts – the 'White Man's Grave' – where no sane man other than perhaps a missionary, a criminal or an appointee would realistically consider settling. South Africa, on the other hand, lay in the temperate zones south of the equator, and as such its white population far exceeded that of any other British territory in sub-Saharan Africa, and so it enjoyed the advantage of a relatively organised and modern society.

This, however, need not imply that South Africa was without problems. Far from it. By the mid-19th century, the regions south of the Limpopo River had fallen under an uneasy accommodation of British colonial and independent Boer republican administrations, and between them, a great deal of mutual distrust and antipathy existed. However, it must also be said that South Africa had very little to offer the British Empire other than the strategic advantages to international shipping of the Cape Colony and Natal. Both colonies had largely agricultural economies, and so long as nothing threatened British interests, the British were content to live and let live.

All of this changed, however, one day in 1866, when the chance discovery of a rough crystal in the dust of Griqualand West fixed South Africa firmly on the global economic map. The then Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, weighed the celebrated diamond in his hand one day and predicted to the Cape Parliament that upon it the future success of South Africa would be built.

Lord Kimberley, of course, was absolutely right. That first diamond set in motion changes that catapulted South Africa from an impoverished colonial backwater to the main theatre of capital adventure and war in the British Empire. A clash of arms between Briton and Boer that had once seemed likely, suddenly became inevitable. Although the diamond fields were manoeuvred into British territory by creative boundary delineation, later, and far more lucrative gold discoveries were made in the Transvaal Republic, indisputably within the heartland of the Boer territory.

The Boer, however, did not necessarily welcome either the gold or the diamonds. They recognised that both meant change, and to the Afrikaner nation, change was not desirable. Within the next few years, the soil of South Africa would yield the world's highest concentrations of both gold and diamonds. Men and capital flooded into South Africa from around the world, and no matter how much the Boers might resist it, this influx precipitated economic development and progress. It brought everything, in fact, that the Afrikaners had crossed their hearts and sworn never to countenance, and most bitterly resented was British social and economic predominance.

Into this cauldron of change, on a chilly September morning in 1870, stepped an unremarkable immigrant by the name of Cecil John Rhodes. Seventeen years old, Rhodes was a tall, asthmatic youth, his complexion sallow, his eyes colourless and his chest sunken. In the company of many other immigrants, he stood on the quayside of Durban docks, looking around at the poor little port town, and pondering an uncertain future. Little did he, or anybody else attending to their business that day, realise that this particular immigrant would set in motion one of the most controversial and colourful chapters of British imperial history.

Cecil John Rhodes was born in July 1853, to the growing family of an unremarkable English country parson. By then the British Empire was approaching its zenith, and Rhodes grew up as one of its typical sons. With its vast markets and huge reservoirs of raw materials, the growing empire played a vital role in the Industrial Revolution, which in turn became the engine that drove the new Age of Enlightenment. In the post-slavery era, British interest in the colonies was as much philanthropic as it was strategic, and as the might and prestige of Britain grew, so her sense of manifest destiny grew. The British Empire in the third quarter of the 19th century was a monumental economic edifice, but also a vehicle for philanthropy on

a vast scale, driven by the God-given right of the English speaking races to rule.

To the English masses, this feeling of global empowerment was typically manifest in jingoistic celebrations and flag waving, but to those of the upper and middle classes such as the Rhodes family, it meant much more than this. It represented the acme of human achievement in a world of enormous scientific, philosophical and artistic advances. It implied a vast global reach, which brought with it equal global responsibility. The British Empire placed the English-speaking peoples at the triumphant pinnacle of political and social accomplishment. It was the greatest formal empire in human history, and Queen Victoria, *Imperator Regina*, sat at the left hand of God from where heaven and earth were governed.

As Cecil Rhodes grew up, he would have taken all this for granted. Barge traffic on the River Stort, which flowed quietly at the bottom of the Rhodes family garden, fascinated the young boy. From his vantage on the edge of the towpath, he could picture this little transport artery branching out through southern England, and then spreading beyond into the wider world, into the great *Pax Britannia* that defined the British Empire, and for all intents and purposes, Britannia *was* the world.

Cecil Rhodes, however, never expected to personally see or play much of a part in the growth of the Empire. As a child, his health was poor, which combined unfavourably with the fact that, academically, he was the least promising of all the Rhodes boys. The Victorian credo that a family deliver up one son to the army, another to the empire and a third to the church left the Reverend Francis Rhodes with a few sons to spare, and one in particular that he considered perfect for the clergy. Cecil Rhodes, however, was ambivalent about this map of his future. He thought briefly about a career in law, but his lack of education and his apparent predestination made this course unlikely, and so drifted, without a great deal of commitment, towards a career in the church.

Francis Rhodes had adroitly stretched the means of his large family to send all but one of his sons to public school. Since Cecil Rhodes was generally considered a poor investment, he attended the local grammar school. However, at age sixteen, persistent ill health seemed to moot even that, and before long he was taken out of school altogether. First, he was diagnosed as suffering from consumption, but later he would suffer numerous heart attacks too, strongly suggesting a congenital heart disorder

as well as chronic asthma. Under the shadow of both of these ailments, his short life would be lived.

As his teens progressed and his life expectancy declined, the family doctor rather despairingly suggested a sea journey to help fortify his lungs. His elder brother Herbert had some years earlier emigrated to the new British colony of Natal where he had secured title to 200-acres in the Umkomaas Valley, where he was attempting to make a go of it as a cotton farmer. Since Herbert was already abroad in the colonies, the most natural solution was for Cecil to simply go out and join him. Nothing was planned for the youngster beyond this since his physicians were of the general opinion that he would not live to see his nineteenth birthday.

So it was then that the seventeen-year-old Rhodes set off alone on a sea journey that would in a few months deposit him on the shores of Natal. By way of capital, he carried the very respectable sum of £2,000, lent to him by his Aunt Sophia, who alone seemed prepared to gamble that her nephew had any future at all.

Herbert Rhodes was a charming and amiable man in his early twenties, handsome despite an imperilled hairline, but feckless too, and a drifter, and something of a disappointment to his father. He forswore the trinity of imperial vocations while labouring at no particular venture or employment for long. Despite this, he was the Rhodes sibling with potentially the most to gain from the advantages offered by the empire. The opportunities for Englishmen of wit and capital in the colonies were almost limitless, although Herbert, with his abundance of charm, seemed nonetheless to lack stamina, and indeed money. He was a thoughtful man of independent temper, the kind of rugged frontiersman and gentleman philosopher without which no adventure story of the period was ever complete, and needless to say he was Cecil Rhodes' favourite brother.

When the two were reunited in Natal, however, Cecil was somewhat disappointed to be informed by his brother that farming in the colony was a waste of time. Herbert was off to try his luck on the diamond fields, and if Cecil wished to produce cotton, then the farm was his. With a handful of possible claims in his pockets, Herbert then lost no time in packing up and joining the steady stream of hopefuls making their way west across the Highveld towards Kimberley. Cecil, now all alone, was left with his older brother's best wishes and half-constructed cotton farm. Attached

to it was a shack, one or two outbuildings and a few listless black labourers who had long been accustomed to erratic wages and a life of general ease.

Cecil Rhodes then made one of the most significant decisions of his life. He could have gone back home, or found a job in Pietermaritzburg, or even followed his brother to Kimberley, but yet he determined to stay on the farm and make it pay. He had come to South Africa with the intention of growing cotton, and grow cotton he would.

He was, however, not without a pragmatic streak, and this would be as vital to his survival on the frontier as his ingenuity and temerity. When the time came to concede that the land would more likely be the fortune of future generations, he cut his losses and swiftly abandoned the farm. Above all else, he had an innate understanding of the importance of capital, which no one, perhaps with the exception of Aunt Sophie, seemed ever to have noticed before. Although he lost money in his first year, the experience taught him how to manage his capital, and this he did with the instincts and caution of a born usurer. Incidentally, and no less importantly, it also put him in the way of managing black labour, which was a skill that one could scarce get by without in the African colonies.

Thus, while his first year in Africa had somewhat fortified his health, more importantly, it revealed in Rhodes those two essential qualities. The third vital element necessary for survival under these conditions was personal courage, and here Rhodes also showed no deficit. When he arrived at the decision to abandon the farm, he packed a wagon and set off to follow the steady stream of fortune hunters making their way to the diamond pipes of Kimberley.

Although the journey took Rhodes four months to complete, these were arguably the most important months of his short life so far. The trek was in the main a solitary undertaking, and once adrift on the open veld, his mind was soon cleared of disorder, and he set about the business of thinking things out.

With no one to talk to, or to anchor his imagination, his thoughts soared in unaccustomed space. His passage became the pilgrimage of a boy journeying towards both manhood and a destiny that he could sense, but scarcely imagine. History is filled with men who by chance and timing have found Providence, and Cecil Rhodes was one of these, as gifted as a blade of grass seeded under a dripping tap, tossed by fate into circumstances that would both nourish and guide him towards explosive growth. A gamut of

sentiments and talents, some due to the indoctrination of his society and others stitched together by chance, would see Cecil Rhodes move almost by predestiny towards a brilliant future. It just so happened that Kimberley, South Africa, and indeed the entire empire was poised and waiting for a man with his peculiar symmetry of idealism, pragmatism and grit to open the door to a new and luminous age.

The Highveld of South Africa was as soulful then in its silence as it was beautiful. From time to time, Rhodes may have encountered a Boer family in the profound isolation that they preferred. He might have mused over coffee with a Dutch patriarch suspicious of the advancing world and perhaps dreaming of another trek north. He walked in the same faith as every man of his generation, conditioned to believe that only Britain, and a population of English speaking settlers, could release from an empty landscape such as this the full fruits of its potential.

As he travelled deeper into the interior, Rhodes saw around him an empty country. He was not the first to see it, of course, but he was one of few to do so in the context of its potential. This was his first glimpse into the vast hinterland of the British Empire, the fertile lands of the outer world that lay waiting for the influence of English creativity and courage. It offered him his first insight into what Empire *actually* meant in real and practical terms. He understood the concept clearly and instinctively, seeing in sharp focus the God-given undertaking of his generation, the most gifted generation of mankind so far.

Underscoring such a lofty view of the world, however, was always a curious core of practicality. Back in Natal, he had left behind men much older than he who had been forced back on their wits by his candour, intelligence and seasoned perceptions. There were few among his acquaintances at that time who were left unimpressed by the breadth of his reflections, his blunt sincerity and his grasp of practical necessity. Unlike his brother Herbert, he was hardly the kind of young man that a Victorian woman would fall in love with, but without a doubt, he was the type that she would conspire to marry.

Cecil Rhodes thought hard about the empty landscape and the Boers who claimed it. He mulled over future British advancement in southern Africa, but above all, he thought about money. It was said of Cecil Rhodes that his weakness was size. He contemplated nothing less than a United States of Africa, stretching from the Cape to Cairo, and he saw it in

the essential context of money, of capital, and the power that money offered. In the young mind of Rhodes, money came to mean the engine of every quest of value. He knew this with the instinct of a pigeon on its homeward flight. If he dared to dream, as many did, he knew that his dreams would be realised only after the amassing of power, and a great deal of money.

It was almost incidental that a year on, the farm did indeed repair his health. Far from dying, his skin darkened, and his arms sprouted muscles. This was just as well, for as he entered the outskirts of the outlandish profusion of digger life called Kimberley, it was apparent that he would need strong arms and a stiff back. He fell into the company of tough men without fear, and soon he became a tough man himself.

Unsurprisingly, and after a month or two of digging, there proved to be a yet more to Cecil John Rhodes the digger than just the growing callouses on his hands. While he wanted to make money and was willing to work for it, he knew that work in itself would not be enough. Digging was one thing, and dig he did, but even with outrageous fortune, there was a limit to what digging could achieve. Most diggers were content with a few lucky finds to add a little to their grubstake before moving on. Rhodes, however, in the company of a few other bright young men, began to play entrepreneur. They speculated on the side-lines by buying and selling defunct claims, and gathering holdings. It was Rhodes, however, who pioneered the formation of an early mining *business* that sought to use accumulated capital in markets more productive than grog and women. He was evidently a man of instinctive financial acumen.

One or two anecdotal observations of Rhodes at that time have survived. Through various of his own letters and correspondence, and the remarks of others, his numerous biographers have pieced together a picture of an earnest young man, tall and rather loosely formed, fiercely territorial, fastidious in the crude business at hand, and alert always for a lucrative opportunity. A letter to his mother tells of him averaging £100 a week, which, by Victorian standards, already had him in the league of successful businessmen.

He formed an early partnership with another young man by the name of Charles Rudd. Rudd was as hardworking as Rhodes, although of somewhat lesser intellect. In due course, he became Rhodes', right-hand man and fixer. The two drifted into such side-lines as making ice for the

diggings and taking contracts to pump the mines. They took substantial risks, but also at times seemed to be able to conjure money out of thin air. Rhodes, in particular, developed a blunt and persuasive nature that caused him to become known as a man impossible to divert. He made few friends but accumulated a great deal of respect, the latter carrying more weight for him than the former. Before long he began to drift beyond the threshold of modest returns, and towards the acquisition of substantial wealth.

With his business thriving, Rhodes then turned his attention to another great quest of his early years, a curious but equally indivertible desire to earn a degree from Oxford University. Why this was so, he never explained, but it can perhaps be taken for granted that he wished in some way to gain admission to the British ruling classes, a door through which money alone would not allow him access.

Before he could give the matter much attention, however, he suffered the first of what would prove to be many heart attacks. By this experience, he was deeply shocked and physically weakened. Not only was he suddenly introduced to his own precarious mortality, but also to the fact that if he did not act both quickly and expeditiously, the likelihood would be that he would die before the realisation of even a small part of his enormous vision.

As he convalesced, Herbert persuaded his brother to take time off, and trek with him to investigate the gold mines that were opening up in the Transvaal. Rhodes agreed, and a month or two of travel and long conversations with his brother proved to be precisely what he needed. During this trip, however, he began the incubation of an idea that had been present in his mind for many months, indeed almost from the moment that he first set foot in South Africa.

It was then that Rhodes began to reveal, not only to his brother but also perhaps to himself, the framework of his unfolding vision. Still only nineteen years old, he was already moderately wealthy, and as a consequence, somewhat over-impressed by his own abilities. Also now something of a student of politics, on this subject, as in almost everything, he held very definite opinions. He now understood that the apparently limitless landscape over which they travelled was one of the last great unclaimed landmasses of the world. At that time, the territory of South Africa was broken up into a handful of hobbling colonies, and half-nations shared unequally and uneasily between two unhappy partners. Rhodes

dreamed of a vast African federation, indeed a global alliance where the English-speaking peoples and their surplus millions could settle and multiply.

His first will and testament, written soon after the conclusion of this journey, and with the images of the South African backcountry still fresh in his mind, vividly portrays the world as it appeared to the young Cecil John Rhodes. He appointed as executor the then Colonial Secretary Lord Carnarvon, and instructed him, with the help of a fortune as yet unmade, to pursue the following quest on his behalf:

> [The] establishment, promotion and development of a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be the extension of British rule throughout the world, the colonisation by British subjects of all land where the means of livelihood are available by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the islands of Cypress and Candia, the whole of South America, the islands of the Pacific not hitherto possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire, the consolidation of the whole Empire, the inauguration of a system of Colonial Representation in the Imperial Parliament which may tend to weld together the disjointed members of the Empire, and finally the foundation of so great a power as to hereafter render wars impossible and promote the best interests of humanity.

By this means, Rhodes proposed to end all wars and introduce as a global standard the tenets and mores of European, English-speaking civilisation. No small ambition for the son of a Hertfordshire country parson, and one further reinforced by the belief that for him and his schemes to be taken seriously, he needed the social vehicle of an Oxford degree. Thus, upon his return to Kimberley, he left his business in the hands of Charles Rudd and sailed back to England to try his luck at the world's most famous seat of learning.

Cecil John Rhodes

4
Rhodes' Weakness is Size

The timid man yearns for full value and asks a tenth. The bold man strikes for double value but compromises on par – **Mark Twain**

Cecil John Rhodes' first foray in Oxford was not conspicuously successful. He failed to impress the Master of University College, who declined to enrol him but referred him instead to the Provost of Oriel College, where standards were thought to be more flexible. Rhodes was accepted into this, the finishing college of so many of England's great middle-class heroes, and thus began his lifelong love affair with Oxford University, a love affair consummated by multiple financial endowments.

The year was 1873, unremarkable in British history, but it would prove to be the year of Cecil Rhodes' awakening. He may at times have believed, among the rough and tumble debating clubs of the diggings, that his intellect was worth something, but in Oxford's halls of higher learning, he quickly came to realise that he was just one of many. Before long his mind was awash with advanced and tutored ideas of 'God and Empire', as he mingled with young men of calibre and breeding, both metropolitan and colonial, who thought precisely as he did, and it was doubtless a source of wonder and edification for him to discover quite how uniquely in step with the times he was.

Beginning a series of lectures at Oxford University at this time was the Victorian thinker, social philosopher and critic John Ruskin. Ruskin typically did not concern himself with esoteric themes of manifest destiny and world empire, but then, and there, he burst forth with an exhortation to all of the gifted young men of England.

> A destiny is now possible to us, the highest ever to be set before a nation to be accepted or refused. Will you the youths of England make your country again a royal throne of kings, a sceptred isle, for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace…? This is what England must do or perish. She must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of the most energetic and worthiest of men; seizing any piece of fruitful waste ground she can get her foot on, and there teaching her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their

country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and by sea.

By then of course, Rhodes was in no doubt that he was numbered among the most energetic and worthiest men of England, and he felt most keenly this cry to make of it a 'Sceptered Isle'. So perfectly did Ruskin's call align with his own thoughts, and so serendipitous the moment, that Rhodes felt nothing less than the light hand of destiny upon his shoulder. He sat down and composed a manifesto, lengthy and ponderous, which he submitted for consideration to the *Fortnightly Review*. This missive was regretfully declined, but it nonetheless survives in Rhodes' archives, and in it can clearly be read the exuberant ambition of man on the very cusp of a grand vision.

> I contend that we are the first race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. I contend that every acre we add to our territory provides for the birth of more of the English race, who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to which the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars.

How bright and tantalising such a vision must have seemed to a young man who, from a substantial economic position in the Cape, could look north and see nothing but empty space, all of it there for the taking.

Not entirely empty, of course, but the native inhabitants of these lands need only submit to the theft of their land to be granted the right in some future generation to call themselves British. This too, of course, was part of that high destiny, for although the aboriginals of the colonies – the tattooed savages of the Pacific Ocean, the enslaved Negros, the Hottentots and the Mohawks – might squirm and resist, as the bright light of Brittania shone upon them, they would unfurl, they would bask and they would multiply.

Although rare today, such ideas were not only commonplace in Victorian Britain, but were substantially believed, and held to be virtuous. Upon centuries of slavery, internal warfare and disease, native Africans of the nineteenth century did not present an encouraging picture. Conditions of life were primitive, and it seemed to many fair-minded imperialists that it

was the duty and responsibility of the white man to facilitate black development by fair and firm management. That Africans could govern themselves in the modern world was seen as just too absurd to be taken seriously. No one in their right might would even dare suggest it.

Rhodes became a familiar figure in all of these discussion forums, and increasingly he was apt to speak his mind. In Oxford in particular, alongside the best and the brightest of England, he would have found and been part of a broad and approving audience. In fact, it was precisely men such as these, the cream of that last generation of the nineteenth century, who would drive the growth of the British Empire to it territorial zenith. On behalf of Her Majesty, they would claim not only the sixteen British territories in Africa but, at one time or another, holdings on every continent of the globe. Such incredible self-belief, such hubris is hard in the modern age to imagine, but in the closing decade of the Victorian century, it was merely a God-given truth. The aboriginals of the world, of course, were in a position to offer little if anything to challenge the sheer weight of European expansion and industrial might, and nor, indeed, to avoid it. The spread of global communications and the joining of the continents could hardly have gone ahead to the exclusion of the majority who were unequipped to embrace or compete since that would have excluded most of the world. They were either to be uplifted, removed or quarantined, but not as a general rule included.

Rhodes was of the generation that replaced the slave economy with mechanisation. The European interest in Africa then shifted from the pursuit of the slave trade to healing the effects of it. This became the Victorian imperial social charter, and the answer lay in leading the native forth from this kindergarten of life towards some point of parity with the civilised races. To achieve this, it would be necessary to introduce the two virtues of Christianity and commerce – to endow the black man with all of the potentialities of the modern age, export his raw materials and then make of him a consumer. This Cecil John Rhodes described as ‘philanthropy plus five per cent’.

In the meanwhile, Rhodes’ second term at Oxford was interrupted when he contracted a chill, and for a while lay seriously ill. His physician, speaking confidentially to his friends, felt that the young diamond magnate’s condition was terminal and that he could expect to live no longer than six months. When he heard this, Rhodes took fright. He was deeply

inspired by all of this talk of destiny, and now he worried that he would die too soon, before he could even begin the great work that he had in mind. Leaving Oxford, and the listless climate of England, he hurried back to the Cape with his degree only partially complete. For some years he would continue piecemeal and eventually earn that degree, but for the time being he had learned enough, and he had much to do, and he longed for the warm weather and dry air of the Karoo.

5
This is Rhodes' Land

What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do – **John Ruskin**

Returning to the Cape, Rhodes entered upon a frenzied and fruitful decade. By then he was steeped in politics, and advocating with increasing passion for South African unification, while at the same time positioning himself as the leading voice for British imperial expansion in Africa. He was also starting to make real money. The first waves of the diamond rush were by then spent, and most of the itinerate diggers and freebooters who had broken ground had now moved on, following rumours of gold and diamonds elsewhere. This left young Cecil Rhodes, and a few other key players, in control of a diminished, but nonetheless steady production of diamonds. And there was more. Rhodes, ever distrustful of women, and happiest in the company of men had fallen in love.

Over the years, very few of Rhodes' biographers, in particular, his early biographers, have been prepared to plunge too deeply into the realm of his emotional attachments. Many protest that it would be pointless to do so, since the subject is quite arid, for Rhodes quite clearly had none. This, of course, is entirely untrue, for he had many, but not one was with a woman, and in all probability not one was physical. The social landscape of the time allowed for homosexual expression, but only on condition that it remain hidden. The Irish playwright Oscar Wilde was already beginning to raise eyebrows in Victorian society, and in 1895 he would prove to the world that it was unprepared for powerful and influential men to admit to homosexuality.

Certain facts, however, cannot be ignored. Rhodes was, for example, conspicuously fond of young men of a particular class and standard of education. His growing business demanded a sizeable administrative staff, and without exception, all of his secretaries and assistants were young men, all well educated and all taken on by 'The Firm' upon the clear understanding that at the moment they married their contracts would be terminated. Modern Rhodes biographers have tended to over-compensate for the conservatism of their predecessors with ridiculous allusions to buggery and flagrant indiscretion. These portrayals, however, seductive to

be sure, carry even less weight than those of the absolute deniers. Rhodes was quite obviously repelled by intimacy of any kind, and his deep friendships with men were love affairs in every respect but this. His brother, Colonel Frank Rhodes, was a well-known lothario, and conducted a great many high profile liaisons, and gloried in his reputation as a ladies man, but not one breath of rumour ever surfaced about Cecil Rhodes.

His living conditions in Kimberley were always basic, and usually, he shared digs with others. For a long time, however, he lived exclusively with a retiring youth, a few years younger than he who was taken on by 'The Firm' as a junior assistant. Neville Pickering, the son of a local Anglican missionary, was short, tending to plumpness, shy and rather witless. Rhodes wrote numerous last Will and Testaments, but the redrafting of his will at this time named Neville Pickering as his sole heir, with instructions for him to finish Rhodes' great work.

Pickering, however, would not live to benefit from this. In June 1884, he was thrown from a horse trap, shattering his leg in a compound fracture that was soon infected. He died a lingering death of septicaemia, nursed exclusively by Rhodes himself, who abandoned a significant transaction in Johannesburg to hurry to his side. When finally his friend and long-time companion succumbed, Rhodes was utterly inconsolable. This was a crucial time in his consolidation of Kimberley diamond production, but he retreated from business and mourned deeply for a long time, and one can speculate that he never really recovered from this tragedy.

Besides all of this, what was taking place on the broader stage of Rhodes' business empire certainly was extremely important. In the summer of 1887, the thirty-four-year-old Cecil Rhodes visited London, and in a series of meetings with the Victorian financier, Nathaniel, Lord Rothschild, was able to secure financial backing for a comprehensive series of acquisitions on the Kimberley diamond fields. His logic in this regard was simple. Under a disunited corps of individual mine owners, all in competition with one another, the world diamond market was flooded, and prices were permanently depressed. Since the bulk of the world's diamonds production at that time was concentrated in Kimberley, Rhodes surmised that if one company could gain a monopoly on production, the subsequent output could be controlled, and prices inflated.

Opposing him in this ambition was an upstart little Jew by the name of Barnet Isaacs, better known as Barney Barnato. Barnato arrived

penniless on the diggings at about the same time as Rhodes, and like Rhodes, he rose rapidly to emerge as one of the most influential figures on both the diamond and the goldfields. He and Rhodes grappled over control of the diamond fields, in a relatively minor scrap that certainly had the potential to arrest Rhodes' meteoric rise in imperial financial circles. Factions formed in Kimberley and an ugly episode played out, revealing for the first time Rhodes' willingness to punch low and fight dirty. Barney Barnato was a Jew, and although not instinctively anti-Semitic, Rhodes nonetheless engineered Barnato's exclusion from the Kimberley Club on those grounds and made fun of him in a subtle propaganda campaign that might not have altered the course of things, but which certainly muddied the waters.

How Rhodes in the end triumphed is probably not particularly revenant here, but suffice to say that he did, and in 1887 he founded the De Beers Corporation, stepping at last into the top tier of the British capital hierarchy. Barnato was later heard to lament: "The worst of Rhodes is that when you have been with him for half an hour, you not only agree with him, but you come to believe that you have always held this opinion."

Barney Barnato was defeated, but once the dust had settled, he was compensated with a life governorship of Rhodes' consolidated interests, and any obstacle standing in the way of his membership of the Kimberley Club were removed. It is worth noting that Rhodes' business partner, friend and long-time confidante was another Jewish financier, Alfred Beit. Rhodes occasionally quipped that a Jew in charge of the treasury was a recipe for wealth, suggesting that his partnership with Beit was purely strategic, but history and the trials of the future would later prove that the two men were indeed very close friends.

By then also, Rhodes' had entered the Cape Parliament as a junior backbencher, representing the Kimberly constituency of Barkly West. He took his seat in 1881, at the age of twenty-eight, and very quickly began to manoeuvre toward a consensus with the Afrikaner Bond, a mostly Dutch-speaking political party in the Cape Assembly. This was to start building a Dutch-English alliance in the Cape legislature as the first foundation of South African unity. With the Cape Dutch on his side, the prospect of bringing the two Boer republics into some sort of a national alliance stood a far higher chance.

The territory of South Africa was still broadly divided into four separate political cantons, and the wealth generated in recent years had done nothing to ease suspicions between them. The broad divisions were the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, both under a degree of self-government, and the independent Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Kimberley fell under the territorial control of the Cape Colony, but the central gold producing areas were in the Transvaal. Needless to say, it was British capital and expertise that dominated the gold sector, and thus the open sore of South Africa remained the goldfields and the economic capital of Johannesburg.

Less obviously, however, was the fact that the Boer suffered from lingering paranoia and animosity towards the British, rooted deep in their mutual history. The republics were founded on a cherished aim of establishing a Boer homeland entirely removed from British interference. The *Volk* desired to sink their ploughs and raise their herds in an open country, with a native population no higher than their labour requirements. Working to this ideal, they established an almost exclusively agrarian economy, based on a system of private fiefdoms and the absolute independence of the individual. Central government was therefore haphazard and ineffective, and this was mostly because the lifestyle of the rural Boer was virtually untaxable. As a consequence, the republics, and in particular the Orange Free State, tended to exist in a perpetual state of economic stagnation.

In the case of the Transvaal, however, gold changed all of this. Mining provided the treasury with a steady and robust stream of tax revenue, but also money from state monopolies on essential commodities like dynamite. These costs mainly affected the *Uitlander*, or 'Foreigner' class, because it was it that controlled this vibrant economic activity. The Government of the Transvaal did nothing more than levy taxes.

The Uitlanders were typically English speaking and of mixed European and colonial origin. They were the diggers, the mine owners, the capitalists and the industrialists of the gold fields. Living alongside the Boers in a state of mutual suspicion they were denied equal political representation. This situation, of course, placed the government of the Transvaal in a unique quandary. As long as taxes were collected and franchise denied, resentment bred and conditions for unrest remained ever-present. Yet if the authorities granted the Uitlanders access to the vote, their

superior numbers and generally superior abilities would marginalise the Afrikaner electorate immediately. Gone in an instant, then, would be that cherished Boer ideal of sovereignty, independence and freedom from British interference.

Then, something happened that really set the cat among the proverbial pigeons. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, the German Empire came into being, and suddenly the Germans were interested in Africa. In 1884, the German imperial flag was hoisted in Damaraland, later to be the colony of German South West Africa. Suddenly the British authorities sat up and took notice. A substantial German presence in the region was potentially explosive, simply because of the strategic proximity of the Cape, and all of that wealth issuing out of the soil of Kimberley and the Transvaal. The Germans would quite obviously like to control both, and since the Boer despised the British with such irrational passion, and since an obvious ideological alliance existed between German and Boer, the potential for trouble was there for all to see.

Needless to say, one of the first to take note of this was Cecil John Rhodes. What he immediately apprehended was that Damaraland, a mostly worthless tract of desert, was nothing more than a first entry into the African imperial game. North of the Limpopo there lay a vast expanse of unclaimed territory that offered the Germans the opportunity to link up their new colony in East Africa with German South West Africa, which would place the German Empire in the most commanding position in Africa south of the equator. Therefore, the obvious next move after Damaraland would be German annexation of the territory of Bechuanaland, which would act as a bridge to the south-central interior. With the Boer as a junior partner, the Germans would then inevitably take Matabeleland and Mashonaland, and indeed beyond to the border of the Congo Free State.

The British premier at the time was William Gladstone, whose primary political interest lay in the question of Irish Home Rule, and he had little if any enthusiasm for events in southern Africa. It was Rhodes, therefore, who outmanoeuvred the Germans, engineering the institution of a British protectorate over the territory of Bechuanaland, against, it must be said, considerable resistance from the local and metropolitan political establishment. The details of this are not particularly relevant here, other than to illustrate the fact that Rhodes, at thirty-three, had pulled off his first major political coup.

The Germans were then blocked in any ambition to move in that direction, but the interior remained wide open, and already frontier diplomats were assembling in the amaNdebele capital of kwaBulawayo, seeking the seal of the King on any document at all. Mzilikazi was by then long dead, and heir to his throne was his son Lobengula, a man of lesser qualities, confronted with realities that had been spared his father.

6
The Irresistible Force

The wolf, too, cannot help having been created by God as he is, but people shoot him for it if they can – **Otto von Bismarck**

On 15 November 1884, plenipotentiaries from all of the major European powers gathered at the official residence of the German Chancellor, Prince Otto von Bismarck. There, in the great library, they took their seats at a horseshoe table, facing a large map of Africa pinned to the wall. This was the commencement of the Berlin Conference, a seminal event in the imperial history of Africa. The conference was convened at the request of Bismarck, and its objective was to define the ground rules of the European takeover of Africa. Belgian King Leopold II claimed the Congo Basin for himself, in an audacious diplomatic manoeuvre that snatched the most lucrative territorial asset in central Africa from right under the European nose. There was a general sense, therefore, among the great powers of Europe, that nothing of the sort be allowed to happen again. It was also of some concern, of course, that all of this political jostling in Africa might trigger the long-feared European war, and to avoid this, certain basic principles were established.

For the purposes of this narrative, only two of these principles bear explaining. The first was the requirement that annexation be considered legal only if accompanied by a plea for protection expressed by local indigenous leadership, ratified by treaty. Secondly, annexation would only be recognised if reinforced by effective occupation and administration. The first stipulation would prove to be relatively easy. Traditional leadership in Africa, critically undermined by slavery and internal warfare, was typically fractured and disunited, so playing one power off against another to gain control of their territory was child's play. In one or two instances, however, powerful and centralised monarchies offered real resistance to this, and one such sovereignty was the amaNdebele.

Lobengula was the unhappy heir to a nation in crisis. To predict the shape of its own future, the amaNdebele nation needed only to consider the recent fate of their mother tribe. The Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 saw the regiments of the mighty Zulu fought to a standstill and defeated by a much smaller British army, equipped with firearms, and supported by the limitless

resources of the empire. After that they had no choice but to succumb to British rule, and if this could happen so easily to the Zulu, what hope might Lobengula nurture that his little empire would fare better.

Added to this was a growing army of white concession seekers, representing private and public interests from across the European imperial spectrum. Each jostled with the other to gain the mark of the king on some concessionary document or another. They maligned one another, manoeuvred against one another, and generally sought to win Lobengula's favour at the expense of the other. Although he understood quite clearly that some diplomatic compromise was necessary, Lobengula, for the most part, had only the vaguest idea of what these men represented.

For more than a generation, the amaNdebele maintained an isolationist position against European encroachment, and as a society, they were determined to remain thus. Now, however, abruptly, the future was upon them, and upon Lobengula in particular. The best that he could hope to achieve was to negotiate his nation's capitulation at the hands of the least disreputable and destructive of his many petitioners. The decision, therefore, confronting him was who among them could he trust.

The main players, of course, were British, German, Boer and Portuguese. The Portuguese occupied the east and west coasts and saw some potential in linking these territories in a band across the entire girth of the subcontinent. But Portugal did not really own the resources to compete in any practical sense with the British or the Germans. The Boer, from their position in the Transvaal, wished to expand further into the interior, which also placed them in competition with the British and the Germans. The Germans, as we have heard, sense an opportunity to link their opposing territories, while Rhodes, on behalf of a disinterested British government realised that his vision of a through route from Cape to Cairo depended in the first instance on British control of Matabeleland.

Of all of these powers, Lobengula knew nothing, but he had taken note of that fact that a neighbouring chief, Kgosi Khama III, who ruled over the BaNgwato people of central Bechuanaland, had accepted the protection of the British Crown, and seemed no the worse for it. Lobengula had many times thought about doing the same, but he could just not bring himself to cross that precipice. Justly or unjustly, Lobengula has been judged by history to be a weak and indecisive man. He certainly lacked the brilliance of his father, and unlike Rhodes, he was poorly suited to the requirements

his times. He was torn between pressure from the whites in his court and a complete rejection by the rank and file of his nation of any compromise at all. He was also under consistent pressure from his generals and advisors, his *indunas*, to order the slaughter all white men in Matabeleland, which could easily be achieved. Lobengula knew, however, that although this might buy him a month or two, a British army would sooner or later appear on his borders, and that would be the end.

One or two of his indunas counselled cautious engagement with the whites, but the majority had no interest whatsoever in any talk of negotiation. The amaNdebele, like their forefathers now resting in noble graves, knew and understood war, and little else. And while Lobengula's reign might have been less than his father's, he was no less the undisputed lord of his people. As a consequence, his personal indecision very quickly came to reflect the mood of his nation, and for better or for worse, the white men were permitted to stay in his country.

It so happened, however, that Lobengula, like his father, enjoyed one or two cordial relationships with whites, was on amicable terms with a salty Afrikaner trader by the name of Piet Grobler. Grobler was a fluent Zulu speaker and regular visitor to Bulawayo, and on behalf of the government of the Transvaal, he succeeded in persuading Lobengula to submit his mark to a general treaty of friendship and amity with the Transvaal Republic.

The facts surrounding this episode are somewhat obscure, although it marks a significant milestone in our story. Grobler, on his return to the Transvaal, was murdered under mysterious circumstances, and his treaty disappeared. However, news of it soon reached the ears of Cecil John Rhodes, pitching him immediately into a ferment of excitement. There have been suggestions that Rhodes was somehow behind Grobler's killing, but logistically this would have been very difficult to achieve, and in all likelihood, Grobler simply fell victim to banditry. The treaty, in the end, amounted to nothing and was never retrieved or acted upon, and its value was just that it spurred Rhodes to enter the race for the annexation of Matabeleland in greater earnest, before the opportunity was lost.

Through his earlier efforts over the territory of Bechuanaland, Rhodes realised that the British Government at that point needed considerable persuasion to act. Cabinet was reluctant as usual to draw upon the treasury, and while Rhodes might reasonably have accused his

government of lacking vision, they might just as quickly have accused him of parochialism. In the event, however, he decided to fall back on his faith in capital, and to proceed by way of a Royal Charter.

The idea of private capital taking on the role of government in claiming and exploiting fresh territory was not by any means new. The Hudson Bay Company controlled Rupert's Land and, of course, the British East India Company held sway over India. Since the loss of the United States, Whitehall tended to prefer defining any new territory first as a 'sphere of influence' before attempting to claim it as a colony. Only if a territory proved viable would a colony usually emerge. In principle, the treasury would absorb any economic benefit that might accrue, while any political liability could be ignored. This was the case with quite a number of territories in Africa, and many others worldwide, and all European countries did it to a greater or lesser extent. It would also, of course, offer far greater personal control of any future colony, which to Rhodes was a significant advantage.

However, for Rhodes to obtain a Royal Charter, it would first be necessary for him to approach the Crown with some proof of consent on the part of the amaNdebele leadership, and it was there, of course, that the problem lay. His immediate course of action was to enlist the help of his friend Sir Sidney Shippard, a mid-level British colonial administrator who was at that time Assistant High Commissioner for Bechuanaland. Together the two men made an approach to the High Commissioner to the Cape Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson. Like Shippard, Robinson was a friend and admirer of Cecil Rhodes, and as the highest representative of the Crown in southern Africa, his support in the matter was essential.

On Christmas Eve, 1887, Sir Hercules happened to be enjoying the Grahamstown races when he was unexpectedly paid a visit by the duo of Rhodes and Shippard. After the briefest of civilities, Rhodes cited the matter of the Piet Grobler Treaty and pleaded that the territory of Matabeleland was about to be lost if prompt action was not taken. He then urged Sir Hercules to immediately declare Matabeleland a British protectorate.

Sir Hercules, however, supportive as he might have been, was nonetheless unwilling to take such a definite step on his own authority. As a short-term alternative, he suggested that Lobengula might be persuaded to sign a similar treaty of friendship with Her Majesty's Government, to either

supersede that of Piet Grobler or exist alongside it. This would buy time so that the means to obtain a Royal Charter could be more carefully prepared. This compromise did not entirely satisfy Rhodes, but it was the best that could be done at such short notice, and it would have to do. It also so happened that the ideal man for the job was, coincidentally, already in Bulawayo, and needed only to be alerted by dispatch. Thus John Moffat stepped on to the stage of Cecil Rhodes' frontier diplomacy.

On reflection, Rhodes was extremely fortunate to have at his disposal a man like John Moffat. Moffat had been exposed to the amaNdebele from a very early age, through his father Robert's long-standing relationship with Mzilikazi. The two sons had known one another since childhood and were on extremely cordial terms. John Moffat, like his father, began his career as a missionary, and during that time spent several years attempting to establish a mission in Matabeleland. The effort failed, and soon afterwards John Moffat resigned from the London Missionary Society and entered the British colonial civil service.

No doubt he was aware, when the despatch arrived in Bulawayo, of precisely what he was being asked to do. John Moffat was the first piece in an elaborate conspiracy that Cecil Rhodes would construct to destroy the amaNdebele, and it would seem that Moffat's friendship with Lobengula did not cause him to hesitate. While his personal regard for the amaNdebele king was no doubt genuine, like most missionaries who had tried and failed to sow the seeds of Christianity in Matabeleland, he might have felt an abstract admiration for the amaNdebele, but for the regime, he had no love. The amaNdebele monarchy was nothing more than a brutal dictatorship premised on extreme violence and repression. Moffat had witnessed that violence first hand, frequently, and he no doubt believed with absolute conviction that under British control the amaNdebele people would be liberated.

In fact, Moffat was acting not on Rhodes' instructions, but on the orders of the British High Commissioner. Rhodes occupied no formal political office at that time, Moffat did not know Rhodes personally and had no idea at that point precisely what he had in mind. He no doubt pictured a British protectorate along the lines of Bechuanaland, which did not interfere unduly with the traditional government of the native people, but only imposed British law and offered basic civil protections to the population. It was only later when it became clear precisely what was underway, and

when Rhodes' reputation in all its variety had matured that he would rise in indignation to write to the London Missionary Society about the occupation of Mashonaland:

"I feel bound to tell you," he wrote, "that I look on the whole plan as detestable, whether viewed in the light of policy or morality…when Lobengula finds it all out, as he is sure to do sooner or later, what faith will he have in you?"

This was all in the future, however, and for the time being Lobengula responded well to Moffat's overtures, perhaps grateful at last to be able to place his confidence in a man that he knew and trusted. He was receptive to the suggestion of a treaty of friendship between him and the British Queen Victoria, and he believed, as no doubt Moffat did too, this it was simply a tender of British protection along the same lines as that enjoyed by his neighbouring Chief Khama.

Despite this apparent agreement and accommodation, Moffat still fought an uphill battle to get Lobengula to actually attach his mark to a supporting document. Lobengula was under the most stringent pressure from his assembly of indunas to submit no verbal agreement to paper. The reason for this was both wise and simple. No amaNdebele in the capital of Bulawayo was able to read or write, so none could verify the content of any treaty signed. It was a sensible position that Moffat certainly understood, but which he was able to overcome eventually. Thus, on 11 February 1888, Lobengula pressed his mark and affixed his seal to the following document.

> The Chief Lobengula, ruler of the tribe known as Amandebele, together with the MaShona and Makalaka tributaries of the same, hereby agrees to the following articles and conditions…
>
> That peace and amity will continue forever between Her Britannic Majesty, her subjects and the Amandebele people; and the contracting Chief, Lobengula, engages to use his utmost endeavours to prevent any rupture of the same, to cause the strict observance of this treaty, and so to carry out the treaty of friendship which was entered into by his late father, the Chief Umsiligaas, with the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, in the year of our Lord 1836.

It is hereby further agreed by Lobengula, Chief in and over the Amandebele country, with the dependencies as aforesaid, on behalf of himself and people, that he will refrain from entering into any correspondence or treat with any foreign state or power to sell, alienate or cede or permit or countenance any sale, alienation or cession of the whole or any part of the said Amandebele country under his chieftainship, or upon any other subject without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa.

In faith of which I, Lobengula, on my part have hereto set my hands at Gubulawayo, Amandabeleland, this eleventh day of February, and of Her Majesties reign the 51st year.

Lobengula: His Mark.
Witnesses: W. Graham & GB van Wyk.
Before me, J.S. Moffat.
Assistant Commissioner.

The content of this treaty of February 1888 seems innocuous, and it was. There is nothing particularly definitive or substantive in the text except perhaps that Rhodes had achieved some form of a negative option on the country. In truth, the treaty carried no more weight than Grobler's had before it, the only difference being that Rhodes was generally perceived to enjoy the full backing of the British Empire. This, of course, was not entirely so, not yet anyway, but it was the sense that he projected, and of course, Moffat was a British imperial servant.

After the signing of the 'Moffat Treaty', a period of nervous calm settled over the community of Bulawayo, although it was not long before intrigue was generated anew. Lobengula made his decision, and for all intents and purposes, the British were in the ascendancy. The King felt that he might now expect some dignity under British protection as well as restraint from opposing powers, but nothing could have been further from the truth. The whites remaining in his court naturally began agitating against Rhodes, swearing to Lobengula that he had been duped, and offering themselves as the only solution. Before Long, Lobengula was gnawing at his fingernails again.

Lobengula

7
The End of the Matabele Road

So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightn' man – **Rudyard Kipling**

Rhodes was aware of the limitations of the current British government when it came to matters of territorial expansion. As aggressive as the British Empire often appears in retrospect, it was in reality ever cautious, and ever reluctant to embrace new responsibility. Extra territory did not always mean additional wealth or prestige, but often just new wars, obligations and expenses. The Moffat treaty, therefore, as satisfying as it was, was not quite enough. It was a treaty of friendship, no more, and as such, it fell short of a specific plea for British protection. Until such an appeal, or some facsimile of it, could be presented to the Imperial Government, the Colonial Office would not award Rhodes a Royal Charter.

In the aftermath of the Moffat Treaty, therefore, Rhodes came to the reluctant conclusion that he would have to revisit Lobengula to press the terms of a concession and push for specific leave to exploit and settle the country. He knew this would not be easy, and at first, he was uncertain exactly how to proceed. In the event, his hand was forced by a duo of London businessmen by the names of Lord Frederick Gifford and George Cawston who, at about this time, announced their own commercial interest in the territory north of the Limpopo.

Maurice Gifford was an aristocrat with a life story enlivened by travel, adventure and many colonial wars. His adventurous spirit eventually drew him to Africa, where he saw action during the Anglo-Zulu War. It was during this period that he first gave thought to the commercial exploitation of Matabeleland, and perhaps even Mashonaland, the latter technically an amaNdebele vassal territory. To join him in forming the Bechuanaland Exploration Company he persuaded prominent London stockbroker George Cawston. This company, a chartered company, was created primarily to exploit the Bechuanaland Protectorate, but the two men were quite candid in their plans to gain control of Matabeleland if they possibly could.

Early in 1888, Rhodes paid a visit to London to discreetly inquire about the possibility of establishing his own chartered company. Later that

same year, a royal charter would be awarded to the Imperial East Africa Company, founded by Sir William Mackinnon for the exploitation of territories that would later become Kenya and Uganda. Two years earlier, a similar charter was granted to the Royal Niger Company, founded by George Goldie, for the region that would later become Nigeria. So while Rhodes was not pursuing anything particularly unprecedented, it was nonetheless confirmed to him that he lacked the most critical requirement, which was a binding contract with the amaNdebele.

In the meanwhile, early in May of that year, George Cawston put pen to paper, and in a letter to Lord Knutsford, the current British Colonial Secretary, he outlined his own plans for acquiring precisely that document from the amaNdebele king. In the letter, he sought approval for a representative of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company to travel to Bulawayo to secure what he described as a 'mining concession' from Lobengula. Fortunately for Rhodes, Lord Knutsford demurred long enough to consult the relevant authorities on the ground, and since Sidney Shippard and Sir Hercules Robinson were those authorities, Rhodes was alerted in time to act.

Despite this, Rhodes and his organisation were caught somewhat on the wrong foot when, in June of 1888, an agent for Gifford & Cawston, a certain Edward Maund, arrived in Cape Town on his way to Bulawayo. Realising that Rhodes would do what he could to delay him, Maund wasted no time in setting off from Cape Town, slipping out of the colony some weeks in advance of any preparations Rhodes was able to make to head him off. This in itself did not unduly disturb Rhodes, for he was confident by then of the loyalty of Robinson and Shippard. Shippard in particular, as Her Majesty's most senior representative in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, could, and certainly did bring to bear any number of frustrations to hinder the unfortunate Maund.

Rhodes then selected a curious troika of men to travel north on his behalf. Principal among them was the phlegmatic Charles Dunnell Rudd, Rhodes' first business partner, and now a director of De Beers. Rudd was an austere man, bereft of humour and of limited vision, but he could be counted upon. The second member was an old friend of Rhodes, James Rochfort Maguire, an Irishman, a barrister by profession and a freebooter by trade. Handsome, dapper and cultivated, Maguire would seem at first to have been an unlikely candidate. He was a Fellow of All Souls whom

Rhodes had met at Oxford, and with whom he shared a common conviction regarding home rule for Ireland. Maguire was, however, urban in outlook, comfort-loving and entirely uneducated in the matter of frontier diplomacy. As a lawyer, however, he would ensure that any business transacted by Charles Rudd would be suitably committed to the contract.

Lastly, Rhodes chose a very skittish and unpredictable character by the name of Francis Thompson, better known as 'Matabele' Thompson. Thompson had a reputation as a 'native expert' due mainly to the fact that he was fluent in a handful of local native dialects. This fluency had little to do with exposure to the far-flung native races, however, but had been acquired on the mines where those races congregated for labour. He happened to have an aptitude for languages, and working alongside Zulu men on the diggings, he picked up their dialects. His role, therefore, was interpreter, to advise Rudd on the amaNdebele and deal directly with them. One wonders, however, how well he was suited to this. He was hampered by a deep distrust and antipathy towards native Africans thanks to witnessing his father's murder during a native uprising. His father had suffered a rifle ramrod pushed down his throat until it came out of his back, the sight of which had quite understandably scarred his son, and definitely influenced his conduct when in contact with an aggressive and surly race of African warriors.

However, with his negotiating team assembled, Rhodes then prevailed on Sir Hercules Robinson to endorse the mission by providing an introductory letter on behalf of Queen Victoria. The letter was of ostentatious size, and replete with gilt devices such as would be bound impress a heathen monarch. Moreover, it was stamped with Sir Hercules' official seal, so that Lobengula, despite his illiteracy, might be suitably impressed by its obvious imperial substance.

On 15 August 1888, the three-man delegation departed Kimberley and made their way directly to Matabeleland. Apart from the letter, and a colossal sum of £1,000 Sterling in gold sovereigns, they carried with them the usual consignment of hard liquor of which Lobengula was extremely fond. After ten weeks of hot and dusty travel, they arrived without mishap on the borders of the amaNdebele territory.

At that point, progress was halted by an amaNdebele border guard that informed Rudd of a royal decree forbidding any white man from proceeding into Matabeleland without the prior and express consent of the

King. Naturally, any incoming petitioner would be expected to adhere to this by dint of basic courtesy, if not self-preservation. Rudd and his companions, however, ignored it and pressed on. A runner was dispatched to kwaBulawayo to announce their arrival, and upon his return, Lobengula's denial of permission to enter the country was confirmed. With absolute indifference to this royal edict, however, the Rudd party continued on, arriving in Bulawayo close to noon on 20 September.

It was perhaps only thanks to their profound audacity that the three were not executed on the spot, for indeed that was the fate of the troops who permitted Rudd and his companions to pass. Instead, the three were met by John Moffat who was urged by the business-like Rudd to press the Lobengula for an immediate audience. A few hours later, an audience was reluctantly granted, but it was stiff, and brief, since Lobengula was chagrined, and refused to discuss any business. In the end, the three men were left with no choice but to retire to the fringes of the capital and set up camp.

By late September, the dry but pleasant winter months of Matabeleland had begun to yield to the scorching 'suicide months' of October and November. These were the months before the annual monsoon, and the ubiquitous dust, smell and heat were bound to make life extremely uncomfortable. Maguire in particular, fond of his comforts, found conditions under canvas particularly odious. Privacy was entirely absent, and as the days slipped into weeks, a plague of flies settled on the camp, and before long he was suffering from the first of several bouts of dysentery. Like in Kimberley had been an unpleasant enough, but he now found the amaNdebele version of court life an aberration, and the capital of Bulawayo no better than a sewer.

The capital of kwaBulawayo was indeed primitive, but it was not without some primal grandeur. The city was dominated by Lobengula's private enclosure, which was a large and imposing structure covering several acres, and consisting of three separate, circular kraals. The first comprised the outer wall, fenced with tightly laced wooden poles, while the second formed an inner enclosure containing the huts of his many wives, his councillors and other personages of importance. Finally, contained within, but separated by its own wooden fence, was the private enclosure of the King himself.

Beyond the walls of the royal kraal sprawled a closely packed assortment of tribute settlements, among which most of the various European camps were scattered. To Maguire, this greater capital, the centre of a native kingdom, was no more than a haphazard sprawl of huts, villages, cattle and goat kraals, and every other factor of native life packed into a vast and stinking miscellany. He described Lobengula himself as a tall, overweight, unwashed and indolent savage. Lobengula was attended by wives who themselves existed in various degrees of degradation, and in common with every other native living in or alongside the royal enclosure, they stank magnificently and appeared to think a great deal more of themselves than their atrocious circumstances would justify.

And if these living conditions were generally malodorous, they were also not without some personal risk. Francis Thompson, in particular, winced at the sight of the armed and hostile men who were in constant attendance, for it was widely known that white skin was protected from brutal execution in Matabeleland by nothing more than the pleasure of the King. The King's justice was dispensed arbitrarily, and the executions conducted outside the wall of the great enclosure were perfunctory, and not uncommon, and always violent.

Despite all of this, the three white men were not alone. No indeed. Apart from missionaries, a handful of whom lived in the district of Bulawayo, rival concession seekers clung to their individual camps and rarely socialised. Rudd and his two companions sat in the shade of their wagons, observed the disorder of daily life around them, occasionally strolling in the surrounding bush, but otherwise occupying themselves smoking, playing whist or backgammon and drinking copious amounts of black tea.

Principal among their rivals – the 'Foreign Legion' as they were known – was a formidable character by the name of Renny-Tailyour. Renny-Tailyour, an Englishman, and a man perhaps in his early forties represented a group of German banks headed by a certain Edward Lippert, and he remained hostile to Rudd and his companions throughout. Also present on occasion was the Reverend Charles D. Helm of the London Missionary Society. Helm had been involved with the negotiation of the Moffat Treaty, acting as interpreter, a role that he would now duplicate on Rudd's behalf. Lobengula seems to have taken a dislike to Francis Thompson, and would have nothing to do with him, so the party was in

need of an alternative interpreter more or less from the onset. John Moffat, of course, was in constant attendance, as was a certain Doctor Knight-Bruce, Bishop of Bloemfontein, who was engaged with a friend on a tour of inspection of the missionary establishments thereabouts. He lingered in Bulawayo for some time, camped nearby and spending long periods involved in idle conversation and games of cards with Maguire in particular.

Besides the 'Foreign Legion', Lobengula also hosted a variety of white chancers, ne'er-do-wells, desperados, liars and thieves who, for reasons close to their own hearts, saw value in keeping themselves beyond the reach of British justice. These men were often in domestic arrangements with native women, and from time to time half-breed children appeared among the usual throng of naked black youth. None of these men had any interest in seeing Rudd or any other party succeed. As a consequence of all of this, a confusion of lying, backstabbing and intrigue accompanied every act of diplomacy undertaken in Lobengula's presence, and in general, the atmosphere in Bulawayo was nervous and toxic.

As far as Lobengula himself was concerned, without any historical catalogue, or written records of his own, he has tended to be discussed and reported upon only by his enemies. His state of mind during that period is, therefore, a matter of conjecture, but one can reasonably guess that his nights were sleepless and his days oppressed. His delay in attending to Rudd and his associates probably had less to do with discourtesy or anger than fear. His situation was manifestly impossible. Surrounded and advised by sycophants no better informed than he, he found himself walking blindly on a veritable minefield of awful possibilities.

To try and get to the bottom of matters, he held a daily council with his senior indunas, inviting on occasions one or other of the Europeans, of whom he appeared to most trust the views and advice of Charles Helm. His indunas, of course, had little if anything to offer, and naturally, the white men, in general, were divided by their own agendas. Helm, who probably meant well, had, like John Moffat, no love for the regime, and by then he was naturally aligned with Rudd. The only thing that Lobengula could be reasonably confident of was that Rudd was of a different cut to the others. His arrogance when entering Matabeleland, and the confidence with which he negotiated all suggested that he was backed by something more than the usual. Lobengula had heard of Rhodes, and he knew something about the

British Empire, so presumably, at the very least, he appreciated that Rudd represented a formidable power. Precisely what form that power might take, however, he had no idea.

In the meanwhile, among his generals and fighting men, there remained a restless enthusiasm for blood. The amaNdebele had developed over the course of their brief history just one response to crisis, and that was violence. There is no doubt that the regiments could with ease have swept the country clean of whites in a single afternoon, and there were many close to Lobengula who urged him to do precisely this. In the end, however, he chose the line of least resistance and delegated as much of the decision as he could to his council of indunas, and in particular his chief advisor Lotje.

Like Lobengula, Lotje was a shrewd and intelligent man. He was elderly by then, the owner of many wives, and father of many more children. A member of the Nguni aristocracy, he had once been a favourite of Mzilikazi. Unlike Lobengula, however, he dared to say what needed to be said, laying bare the only possible route available to the amaNdebele people at that point. It was neither a safe nor a secure road, but if the declining fortunes of the nation could not be arrested in that generation, then nothing but it remained. The sons of Nguni had no choice but to negotiate a surrender with the most powerful of their enemies.

This essential wisdom was of course not easily digested, but Rudd and his lieutenants were omnipresent in court and applied steady pressure. Lobengula held back as Lotje fought for some consensus in the council, conferring with Helm, but the missionary was no longer with him. Helm's loyalty was invested foremost in God and the British, and he championed the interests of both. In due course, Lobengula called a full meeting of his council of indunas, to which he invited Rudd and his confederates for something of a final showdown.

A spontaneous display of anger followed. The council members turned a deaf ear to what was said to them, but heckled and jibed the Englishmen, forcing them back on their wits. For a time the three men wondered if this was not some sort of trap that would end in their being dragged out and killed. This display, however, did not mean that the council rejected reality, or failed to recognise the facts, but merely that they wished to vent their frustration and go down with the dignity of a fight. It also, however, did not mean that a concession was immediately forthcoming. Ultimately it was a pledge of firearms that sealed the bargain. Guns would

obviously be difficult to deliver, but they were just the kind of inducement that would appeal to a weak dictator. This offer also gave Francis Thompson the opportunity to make a relevant point, that if Rhodes' intent was hostile, then why would he arm the very people he intended to attack?

Meanwhile, waiting on the borders of Matabeleland, ostensibly investigating the murder of Piet Grobler, was Sir Sidney Shippard, making himself available as Her Majesty's representative, to be summoned as necessary. It was anticipated that his presence would add the right measure of imperial weight to Rhodes' petition, which seemed to work, and Lobengula agreed to meet with Shippard before any final decision was made. Dropping his investigations, Shippard spurred his horse and hurried towards Bulawayo, arriving on 16 October 1888. It is worth noting that he appeared in the capital two days behind the hapless Edward Maund, who had been effectively delayed for weeks.

A plump, balding and somewhat portentous man, Shippard did not present a particularly vigorous symbol of empire, but he did impress Lobengula by becoming the first man ever to approach him in a standing posture. Not even Rudd had so far chanced that degree of familiarity. Thereafter, heartfelt endorsements of Rhodes followed, mingled with subtle allusions to the destruction of the Zulu, all of which conveyed an unambiguous message to Lobengula. By the time Shippard left Bulawayo, two days later, the status quo had dramatically altered. Deflated and worn down, his indunas sullen but compliant and his army restive, Lobengula surrendered to pressure and consented to affix his seal to a concession.

The terms of the Rudd Concession were quite simple. The amaNdebele were offered 1,000 Martini-Henri rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition and a gunboat on the Zambezi River, although Lobengula could waive the latter in exchange for £500 if he chose. In addition to this, Lobengula himself, his dependents and his heirs would receive £100 per month for the remainder of their lives. In exchange, Rudd hoped to secure the right to prospect over all the territory under Lobengula's control, which, according to both parties, included much, if not all of Mashonaland. With this right came absolute assurances from Rudd that no actual land was desired from the amaNdebele, and that very few whites would, in reality, enter the country.

The text of the concession as Maguire prepared it contained all the specific rights conceded to Rhodes, and yet was conspicuously thin on

reference to Lobengula's stipulations. Specifically stated was the fact that no more than ten white men were to enter the country for the purpose of mining. To this Rudd agreed, but it did not appear in the subsequent text. The written document was also deliberately vague about the extent of operations proposed, and in fact, imposed no limitations on itself at all.

The unlikely villain in this piece was none other than the Reverend Charles D. Helm. Playing very heavily on Lobengula's trust, he committed a blatant deception. Despite the obvious omissions to the text, Helm added his signature to it stating that it represented exactly the words and intent that had been agreed upon by the two parties. Much later he admitted the deception in a letter to the London Missionary Society.

"Rudd and Company," he wrote, "promised that they would not bring more than ten white men to work in his country, that they would not dig anywhere near towns etc. and that they and their people would abide by the laws of his country and in fact be as his people. But these promises were not put in the concession."

There can be only one possible explanation for this. Helm, like Rhodes and others, felt a misplaced sense that, while the native may rebel against the imposition of external standards, and squirm under the unaccustomed light of civilisation, it would ultimately be to his advantage to stand up and perceive his nakedness. While questionable tactics might have to be used to bring him under British control, he would be happy and forgiving whence he arrived.

There was, of course, some truth in this. Men of sensitive disposition like Helm, Knight-Bruce and Moffat must have been revolted by the oppression and violence that daily characterised the amaNdebele regime. Lobengula was conspicuously less cruel and violent than his father, but nonetheless, the daily lives of the amaNdebele people were passed under a spectre of arbitrary and at times extreme brutality. Methods of execution were Medieval, and death the sentence most commonly given. The plight of the maShona, of course, was infinitely worse. Any means to lift the natives of the plateau out of their current condition, therefore, could not but be blessed in the eyes of God.

While the gist of the Concession was the right to mine, Rhodes had only an academic interest in what might be discovered. He had passed beyond the simple quest for money. His principal desire was now to create a society where Englishmen of character and industry could build a homeland

and thrive. He sought the expansion of British interests in Africa for its own sake, to drive the influence of the Empire deep into the interior of Africa. There he would confront the interests of his rivals, and try to claim the entirety of the sub-equatorial landmass for the British Crown. Gold and diamonds were promised simply to attract necessary capital subscription, and this indeed was the enigma of Cecil John Rhodes. He was by then one of the wealthiest men in the world, and his highest objectives were above reproach, but consistently they were sullied by sharp practice, and in this, the Rudd Concession was no different.

Thus, while Lobengula dared to hope for the narrowest possible definition, Rhodes was already thinking ahead. The next phase of his quest would begin with a royal charter. As Charles Rudd made his way south with the precious document, Rhodes had already begun to prepare the groundwork for his submission to Imperial Government. In the meanwhile, the Rudd Concession stirred a great deal of speculation in the press, and both those for and against Rhodes agreed on at least one thing, that Lobengula had fallen into the net, and given away, if not all, then at least a significant part of his country.

8
The Matabele Embassy

Did you ever see a chameleon catch a fly? *The chameleon gets behind the fly and remains motionless for some time, then he advances very slowly and gently, first putting forward one leg and then another. At last, when well within reach, he darts out his tongue and the fly disappears. England is the chameleon, and I am that fly!* – **Lobengula.**

Lobengula was left in the aftermath with ample time to reflect, and of course, there was no shortage of sceptics to stir up his fears. Rudd left Bulawayo at the moment that the concession was signed, leaving behind his two associates, which was certainly a mistake. Neither Maguire nor Thompson was a forceful man, and the vacuum of authority gave Lobengula and his counsellors much opportunity to ruminate on bad advice. As word of how the Rudd Concession was being viewed abroad began to filter through to Matabeleland, Lobengula set about trying to understand precisely what he had done. He summoned a meeting of all the whites in Bulawayo who naturally fed him a banquet of contradictory propaganda. Lobengula justly felt trapped, deceived and in imminent peril of invasion.

An interesting result of this gathering was a later meeting held between Maund, Renny-Tailyour and a few others where it was decided to form a united if temporary front against Rhodes. They convinced Lobengula that Rhodes did not act with the authority of the Crown, and put it to him that only a direct appeal to Queen Victoria would expose him as a fraud. For this purpose, it was proposed that Lobengula appoint an ambassador to travel to London to present his position directly to the Queen.

Lobengula was delighted with this suggestion, and from his inner circle of advisors, he selected two men, the Indunas Mtshete and Babayane, to undertake the mission to London. They took with them at least one letter, although there could have been two, the existence of the second has never been established for sure. Both would have been composed by Maund and Renny-Tailyour, and it is inevitable that neither represented what Lobengula actually wished to say.

According to most sources, the first letter asserted Lobengula's territorial claims regarding the Portuguese in Mashonaland and was really

no more than a plea for assistance under the terms of protection implied by the Moffat Treaty. The second, less credibly, questioned the very existence of a Great White Queen and announced that Lobengula was sending his indunas to investigate the matter. To this, the King apparently added that foreign concession seekers were odiously troubling him and that he could find none among the whites whom he could trust. He asked that Victoria send an emissary of her own.

The amaNdebele Embassy set off from Bulawayo in the company of Edward Maund sometime in late November of 1888. Initially, Maund chose a route that carried the three by a combination of road and rail through the Transvaal, hoping by this means to avoid any interference from Rhodes. Just how enthusiastic Transvaal President Paul Kruger and his government were to assist in discrediting Rhodes is indicated by the fact that Mtshete and Babayane were permitted to travel on the inside of a mail coach, probably the first black men ever to do so in the Transvaal.

Despite these precautions, Rhodes inevitably intercepted Maund and his party when finally they reached the railhead at Kimberley. He was apparently profoundly disturbed by all of this, appearing at Maund's hotel room in a state of agitation, his face flushed and sweating and his breathing ragged. He tried alternately to bribe and threaten Maund, but could not persuade him to reveal the contents of the letters that he was carrying. Maund then continued on to Cape Town, leaving Rhodes both anxious and enraged. In Cape Town, thanks to the efforts of Sir Hercules Robinson, the party was further delayed as Rhodes frantically sought some solution to the crisis.

As his emissaries proceeded south, in the meanwhile, Lobengula's mind still churned, and in response to ongoing newspaper coverage, he decided to compose his own statement to the press. On 18 January 1889 he dictated a letter in which he stated: "I hear it published in newspapers that I have granted a concession of the minerals in all my country to Charles Dunnell Rudd, Rochfort Maguire and Francis Thompson. As there is a great misunderstanding about this, all action in terms of the said Concession is hereby suspended pending an investigation to be made by me in my country."

Lobengula despatched this communiqué south, but it was not picked up or published until at leas5t a month later when it appeared in the limited circulation *Bechuanaland News*. By that time Maund and his companions,

as well as Rhodes himself, were well on their way to London to do battle over the Royal Charter.

For the two indunas, the sea voyage must have been the climax of an odyssey that had already taken on a surreal dimension. It is not difficult to imagine, with every mile they travelled, what effect the gathering pace of industrialisation must have had on them. Tales they might have been told about the white man and his abilities would by then have begun to crystallise in their minds completely. With sinking hearts, they would have begun to see clearly that their little empire was insignificant indeed.

Besides this, the tide in London had already begun to move against them. Rhodes by then possessed the economic gravity to establish a momentum simply by his involvement. He was not popular within the establishment, because he was a precocious upstart, but he was also impossible to ignore. Lord Knutsford, who appreciated this fact instantly, advised Lord Gifford to consider an amalgamation with Rhodes, rather than to risk an open fight which Rhodes would almost certainly win. Gifford agreed. It would be a cost-effective solution, and the name Rhodes, of course, was synonymous with success. Rhodes greeted the news with equal enthusiasm, and once again he successfully 'squared' his rivals. This marriage would not be consummated for some time, and in the end, it benefited Rhodes almost entirely, but more importantly, it rendered the Matabele Embassy irrelevant before the two indunas even made landfall in England.

Needless to say, Edward Maund switched sides at the moment he was informed of the partnership. He no longer mentored the Indunas, but simply guided and escorted them. By the time the ship hove-to in Southampton docks, the Embassy had been downgraded to a visiting delegation, and the press were on hand to greet them as such. After settling into a hotel in London, they were officially welcomed by the Colonial Office and later received at Windsor Castle where they met and briefly exchanged pleasantries with Her Majesty.

Misunderstanding the situation, however, they were anxious to talk to her, but the conversation was kept brief and general, and they were denied that opportunity. A few days later they were granted a brief audience with Lord Knutsford, and it was to him that they handed their communication. This he glanced at, and having briefed them on Rhodes' progress, told them quite frankly that the game was lost. He advised them,

rather cautiously, to nonetheless be extremely careful of Cecil Rhodes, who Lord Knutsford, as a blue-blooded member of the ruling caste, despised. Rhodes could not be trusted, he said, and if only one thing could be guaranteed, it was that an ace was hidden somewhere in his sleeve, and it would just be a matter of time before he played it. Besides that, he ruefully acknowledged, Rhodes had won this round, and that was that.

In the meanwhile, the two were escorted through all the major sights of London, attending banquets and receptions where they were feted, celebrated and paraded as a curiosity. Nothing was denied them. One day, they were treated to a display of naval gunfire in Portsmouth, and machine-gun exercises on the range at Aldershot. It was all jolly stuff, but the residue of it was deeply sobering. Everything that they saw merely served to confirm the pathetic futility of their tiny little kingdom. In early April they embarked at Southampton docks, still in the company of Edward Maund, and prepared for the long sea voyage back to Cape Town.

9
A Man of Destiny

Having read the histories of other countries, I saw that expansion was everything and that the world's surface being limited, the great object of present humanity should be to take as much of the world as it possibly could
– **Cecil John Rhodes**

The British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury did not care for Cecil John Rhodes, or men like him. However, beset by wider issues, he was reconciled, at least for the time being, to allow private capital to forge the path. Rhodes, he found parochial, his thinking limited to the African theatre, while he was forced to apply his mind to the international stage. The fact remained, however, that that little blank spot on the African map, owned by a native king could also hardly stand in isolation. Sad as it was, the age of savage empire was ended, and those stalwart natives, standing against the inevitable, were to be admired, but also allowed to die. Let Rhodes do it. It was his vocation, and if not he, then who? The Germans? The Portuguese? Certainly not!

It is also worth bearing in mind that Rhodes was by then widely admired in metropolitan England, where he was seen very much through the prism of British imperial hubris. Men like Rhodes straddled the world, their deeds celebrated by the likes of Rudyard Kipling and Alfred Austin. Monumental advances in literature, art, science, engineering and industry were all wrought by English hands, and devised by English minds. The English speaking race was omnipresent, and the meteor of British imperial glory was arcing towards its zenith. It was an energetic and exciting time, and Africa held a particular fascination. By then the south-central interior was known, the Great Lakes had been mapped, and the Source of the Nile realised. Livingstone stamped his mark on the Zambezi and Lake Nyasa, Burton and Speke on the Great Rift Valley and Henry Morton Stanley on the Congo River, and the fabled ‘Mountains of the Moon’. Africa was indeed the advancing frontier of the British Empire, and Cecil John Rhodes was the engine of that advance.

In the meanwhile, a few weeks behind Edward Maund and the Matabele Embassy, travelled Rhodes himself, arriving on English shores more or less as the two Indunas and their companion were making ready to

return. By the time he made landfall he already knew the outcome of the amaNdebele mission, and the matter no longer occupied his mind. He was preparing to do battle with far more powerful forces than they, and there was already a buzz of excitement in London in anticipation of his arrival. Still only thirty-six years old, he was both wealthy and influential, and although many supposed that he would enter British politics, he had no such intention. He was confident that he had done what could be done in Bulawayo, and all that remained now was to win the support of the British establishment. His supporters would support him to the hilt, and that those that did not could be paid off.

The obstacles, however, were not insignificant. For example, the letter by which Lobengula sought to suspend the Rudd Concession appeared first in a small newspaper in Bechuanaland before it was picked up by the British metropolitan press. This stirred the anxieties of the various native protection societies, some of which had only recently hosted and bid farewell to the two amaNdebele Indunas. Soon afterwards, after delaying as long as he could, Sir Hercules Robinson was obliged to forward the full text of the Rudd Concession to the Colonial Office, where it was read with mild dismay by Lord Knutsford. In combination, the whole business looked slightly shabby and disreputable, and it certainly did not reflect well on Rhodes. Sir Hercules sought bravely to talk the matter up, appending to his despatch a complimentary report on Cecil Rhodes, which inevitably came across as disingenuous. “The effect of the concession to a gentleman of character and financial standing,” he wrote, “will be to check the inroad of adventurers as well as to secure the cautious development of the country with proper consideration for the feelings and prejudices of the natives.”

Rhodes, of course, had to date shown nothing but a manifest disregard for the feelings and prejudice of the natives. He might arguably have been a gentleman of character, although there were contradictory opinions on this, but what could never be denied was that he was a man of financial standing. He also happened to be one of passionate determination and proven competence, and in combination, these powers were formidable. While the two Indunas were assured on their departure by Sir Foxwell Buxton, chairman of the Aboriginal Protection Society, that before long Englishman and Matabele would meet in the valleys of the Limpopo as happily as they did that day in Westminster, Cecil Rhodes set about the business of ensuring that they never would.

Rhodes' first and most crucial trophy, of course, was the partnership of Gifford and Cawston. By April of 1889, any differences between the two parties had been largely bridged. The two men would help Rhodes, and Rhodes would help them. Gifford lodged an application to the Colonial Secretary, on behalf of the Bechuanaland Exploring Company, for a Royal Charter to develop Bechuanaland and the territories to the north it, attached to which was a letter of recommendation signed by Rhodes and Alfred Beit on behalf of Goldfields of South Africa. Behind this, quite obviously, was the understanding that Rhodes would take Matabeleland and Gifford & Cawston would take Bechuanaland.

While Rhodes was thus disposing of rival claims, he was having more difficulty squaring those whose motivations were not financial. The London Chamber of Commerce, for example, complained that the Rudd Concession represented a monopoly, under the terms of which Rhodes and his associates would have sole access to the mineral wealth of an entire country. This, it was argued, was against the principals of free trade. The South African Committee, with a membership including such luminaries as the 4th Earl Grey, expressed the suspicion that Rhodes intended the mass appropriation of native lands. The Colonial Office, ever sensitive to pressures on the purse, predicted that a war would be inevitable. Missionary societies and Afro-paternalists opposed the charter for reasons ranging from land rights to the policy of supplying the amaNdebele with firearms. To all of these, Rhodes responded with his customary composure, either paying them off or ignoring them.

A harder nut to crack, however, was the aristocracy, and this fact more than any other must have cut to the quick of Rhodes' personal dilemma. His acceptance in this exclusive caste could hardly depend on money alone, and nor for that matter on a second-class degree from Oxford. For the son of an English country parson to gain acceptance by the great houses of England would require a rare art of persuasion, and Rhodes was not altogether confident that he had that. Nonetheless, he set to work, and to the surprise of many, not least himself perhaps, he quickly gathered around him a clique of noble supporters. One of these was Lord Cecil, the son of the British Prime Minister, another the Duke of Abercorn, and another the Duke of Fife, and yet another the future Earl Grey.

Having thus co-opted the aristocracy Rhodes turned his attention to the press. Until then he had been less than the darling of the metropolitan

broadsheets, within which he was often portrayed not only as an uppity colonial but as a pirate capitalist and a pseudo imperialist. One of his most vociferous detractors was William Thomas Stead, a social commentator and charismatic publisher of the popular *Pall Mall Gazette*. Famously, Rhodes won Stead over during a society luncheon party, converting him into a staunch and powerful ally. Stead was followed in close formation by *Times* correspondents Scott Keltie and Flora Shaw, after which not one ever again deviated from a slavish devotion to Rhodes and his vision. The powers of persuasion of the 'Colossus' were never more impressive than this. These dramatic conversions marked a turning point in the widespread perception of Cecil John Rhodes. Eulogies began to flow from such prestigious publications as the *Times*, the *Pall Mall Gazette,* the *St. James Gazette*, The *Fortnightly Review* and The *Nineteenth Century*. In May 1889, even the Royal Geographical Society, the gold standard of establishment opinion, endorsed the concept of commercial associations as the best means of disseminating civilisation throughout central Africa.

Under the surface of this gathering *tour de force*, however, a little of the old Rhodes went mostly unnoticed. Soon afterwards he founded the iconic British South Africa Company as the vehicle to operate his charter. As shares and options were being allocated, the public and the directors believed that the British South Africa Company owned the Rudd Concession, which was, in fact, not the case. The Rudd Concession was owned by a shadowy entity formed at more or less the same time and known as the Central Search Association. The principal directors of the Central Search Association were Rhodes, Alfred Beit, Gifford, Cawston and Charles Rudd. The essence of the deception was an agreement among these five men to allow the British South Africa Company the use of the Rudd Concession in exchange for half its profits. In July of the following year, the Central Search Association reinvented itself as the United Concessions Company, with a capital of four million £1 shares. These were founded on the United Concession Company's claim to British South Africa Company's profits, and after the issue, the British South Africa Company bought out the United Concessions Company for one million specially created shares. These shares stood at between £3 and £4 apiece, but the expectation was that they would inflate considerably, allowing for quick and substantial profit taking on the part of the principal directors.

Although a very cunning piece of corporate engineering, it nonetheless revealed both the enigma and the tragedy of Cecil Rhodes. While a man of soaring vision and phenomenal energy, capable of inspiring such devotion in a diverse following, somehow a residue of villainy always seemed to stain the bed linen. As time passed, this fact would come more and more to characterise his work, and the older he grew, the worse it became.

Nonetheless, during that season, the intoxicating spring of 1889, Rhodes stood, at last, on the cusp of astronomical success. Despite spirited questioning in the House of Commons, in particular over the apparent deception of the Reverend Charles Helm, and the casual use of Her Majesty's representatives, no substantive challenge to Rhodes' petition for a royal charter was heard. Outside of parliament, however, there did remain a residue of opposition, but one particular name here bears mentioning. Among the liberal, Afro-paternalist elements of British society was the great, thirty-seven-year-old hunter-explorer, Frederick Courtney Selous.

Selous was a society darling, handsome, cultivated and well-born, and he had very particular ideas about what Rhodes was up to on the central plateau. He had no specific regard for Lobengula or the amaNdebele, and indeed, that feeling was very much reciprocated. His interest lay instead with the maShona, and he argued that any deal cut with the amaNdebele did not automatically implicate the maShona. It was his position that neither Mashonaland nor the fate of the maShona people was Lobengula's to dispose of and that the tribes of Mashonaland remained sovereign. He held numerous concessions signed by various maShona chiefs, which he determined, and argued quite forcefully, existed independent of any treaty with the amaNdebele.

It was, of course, a somewhat esoteric point, but it was an irritation to Rhodes nonetheless, and he determined that he would need to keep a close eye on Selous in the future. Despite this, however, and a handful of other voices grumbling in the background, Rhodes' petition was approved, and his Royal Charter was signed into effect by Her Majesty on 29 October 1889. Some weeks in advance of this he left England, satisfied that the job was complete and content to leave the details to his London staff. Soon after his departure, however, Lord Knutsford was handed a letter from Lobengula listing all of his grievances and concerns, his sense of betrayal and his confusion at what was taking place. It was a melancholy end to a rather

sordid business, and an unhappy residue of the monumental process of colonisation for which Lord Knutsford, as Colonial Secretary, was, for the time being, responsible.

10
Doctor Jim

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch – **Rudyard Kipling**

Rhodes now had his Royal Charter, he had the British South Africa Company, and the game was on – or at least it was almost, for Lobengula, a lonely figure indeed, kept up the persistent appeal that he had been manipulated and deceived. In the grand scheme of things it made no difference, because if not Rhodes, then someone, but yet that liberal and sentimental element of British society demanded his full and absolute acquiescence before Rhodes could set foot in his territory. It was absurd indeed, but it was a fact of life, and it required attention.

Lobengula's decree suspending the Rudd Concession came into effect even before Rhodes left for London, and the best and only chance to reverse it now was to somehow persuade him to accept delivery of the guns. This would not be easy, and certainly, it was beyond Thomson or Maguire, and so Rhodes looked around his inner circle, and his eye fell on a most unlikely character. Leander Starr Jameson, a man of precisely the same age as Rhodes, was an acquaintance of some time. The two shared digs in Kimberley, and as a local general practitioner, Jameson attended to Rhodes during his occasional bouts of asthma. A short, compact man, his hairline was receding, his eyes were blue and sparkling and his wit acerbic. Brilliant, and ever entertaining, he was a man about town, a card sharp, a raconteur and quite content, it would seem, with his life in Kimberley. Like Rhodes, his arrival in South Africa was consequent to ill health, and he too found the dry atmosphere of the Karoo therapeutic.

Unlike Rhodes, however, he was without apparent ambition, and although Rhodes had from time to time offered him a place in The Firm, Jameson had so far demurred. Rhodes, however, knew that the day would come when Jameson's combination of charm, wit, cunning and unscrupulousness would suit a particular purpose, and this seemed to be that day. Jameson, however, found the proposal that he travel to Bulawayo and negotiate with a savage monarch absurd, and no doubt a little hysterical too, but at the same time, he could sense that Rhodes was for once serious, and when Rhodes was in earnest, he usually got his way.

Within a day or two, therefore, Leander Starr Jameson found himself en-route to Bulawayo in the company of Rhodes' senior secretary, Doctor Frederick Rutherfoord Harris. The latter was also a medical doctor, also lately in practice in Kimberley, but unlike Jameson, an austere and rather humourless man, better known for his quiet competence than the tonic of his bedside manner. Accompanying the two was a transport contractor carrying the first consignment of Martini-Henry rifles promised to Lobengula under the terms of the Rudd Concession. Jameson, of course, was thoroughly briefed, and, as Rhodes anticipated, the two men understood one another perfectly. Jameson, however, made it absolutely clear to Rhodes that this would be his one and only commission on behalf of The Firm, to which Rhodes solemnly agreed, but he was quite confident that from then on Jameson would do precisely what was expected of him.

On his first visit, Jameson spent only ten days in Bulawayo. Granted an audience with Lobengula almost immediately, he bettered both Rudd and Shippard in uncommon familiarity, approaching the King in a standing posture, pausing only at shaking his hand. By then Lobengula was growing accustomed to this sort of thing, and he took this latest outrage calmly, and Jameson strictly at face value. Jameson, however, immediately unleashed his formidable arsenal of charm. Gone was the down-talking agent of the Crown, the whining missionary, the slippery concessionaire and the obsequious trader, for in 'Doctor Jim', Lobengula encountered something altogether different. Jameson's confidence, his easy familiarity and his natural congeniality all disarmed Lobengula, despite himself. Soon Jameson was examining the royal feet, agonised by gout, and for this, he administered morphine. Within moments, Lobengula's pain and anguish of mind evaporated, and perhaps for the first time in his life, he felt at ease in the company of another human being. He would, however, discuss no business, nor hear anything of accepting delivery of the consignment of guns.

Jameson, of course, took this in his stride, sensing that he had achieved much in winning Lobengula's trust and affection and that the rest could wait. He and Rutherfoord Harris then set off back to Kimberley, bringing with them Rochfort Maguire, who by then had endured as much of Bulawayo as he could stomach. Francis Thompson's constant paranoia and endless predictions of a horrible death had begun to wear him out. His

departure, however, left Thompson alone in Bulawayo, which was not only ill-advised but cruelly unfair too.

Rhodes, in the meanwhile, returned in South Africa sometime in early August 1889, having successfully disposed of his business in London. The amaNdebele Embassy was back in Bulawayo, and Lobengula had been briefed on the results. Lord Knutsford's reply had been read to the council of indunas, and news of Rhodes' award of a Royal Charter widely circulated. On 10 August, a few days after Rhodes' arrival in Cape Town, yet another plea was sent on Lobengula's behalf to Queen Victoria (that read by Lord Knutsford), and this time a note of hopelessness was unmistakable.

"…the white people are troubling me much about gold. If the Queen hears that I have given away the whole country, it is not so. I do not understand where the dispute is because I have no knowledge of writing."

In the meanwhile, Lobengula summoned a meeting of all of his senior indunas and, during a stormy debate, a senior counsellor by the name of Hlesingane, who was one of very few amaNdebele to have actually visited Kimberley, openly admonished the King for what had taken place. Hlesingane laid before Lobengula and his council a few undeniable truths. It would be impossible, he said, for just ten white men to mine gold. Mining required land, and how would these white men mine without land? What about producing food, and firewood, and labour? Would all this not take land, and require many more than just ten men? Others shouted in agreement, and in due course, Lobengula directed his eyes at Lotje, who sat silently. This unfortunate man, with his loyalty and good intentions, must be sacrificed. Within a few minutes of his indictment, Lotje was escorted beyond the royal enclosure and executed, along with his family, dependents and livestock.

It was a brief and bloody affair, over within an hour, but news of it reached Francis Thomson as he returned to Bulawayo alone in a horse-drawn cart after a visit to Charles Helm's Hope Fountain mission. An elderly amaNdebele woman whom he knew approached him and whispered that further killings were being planned. Already weighed down by paranoia and neurosis, Thompson took this as a warning, and promptly untethered the fastest horse from the team and fled the scene in a blind panic. Arriving in Mafeking a few days later, he cabled Rhodes in Kimberley with the news and nervously waited for his reply.

Rhodes, of course, was horrified. His reply accused Thomson of a dereliction of duty, and he ordered his return, but Thompson could not be persuaded. In desperation, Rhodes turned once again to Jameson, and this time there was no hesitation. Jameson set off immediately for Bulawayo, pausing briefly at Mafeking where he collected a sullen and reluctant Thompson. The two then continued north, arriving in Bulawayo in mid-October, a little less than a fortnight before Queen Victoria was scheduled to sign the Royal Charter. On his arrival, Jameson was gratified to be welcomed into Lobengula's presence as an old friend.

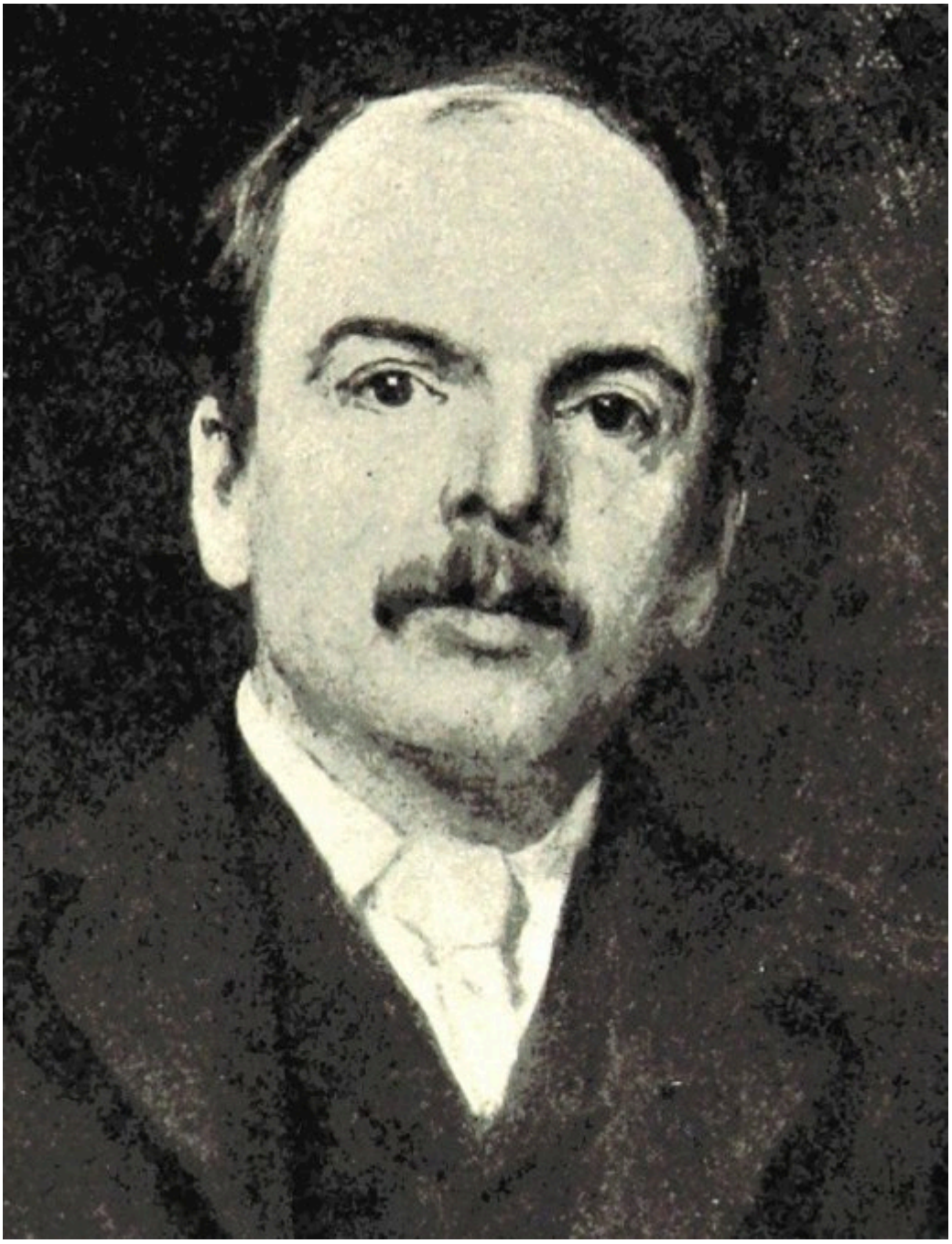
Nothing, however, had changed, and Lobengula still resolutely refused to accept the guns that lay waiting in storage, and he was insistent now that Rhodes present himself in Bulawayo in person. *Ilodzi*, as Rhodes was known in Matabeleland, had by then assumed an almost mythical stature, and Jameson rightly supposed that it would hardly do to hang upon this legend the mortal flesh of a sickly man. Besides, Rhodes was always too busy, and as a consequence, he and Lobengula would never meet. Jameson continued to labour valiantly but could make no impression on Lobengula. With the British South Africa Company fully subscribed, and the Royal Charter en-route to Cape Town, the validity of the Rudd Concession still remained in question.

As the year progressed, however, and the annual monsoon came and went, Jameson settled reasonably comfortably into the court life of Bulawayo. He attended to Lobengula's ailments, read to him, entertained him, and with infinite patience and cunning wore him down. As a sign of Lobengula's personal regard, Jameson was made an honorary induna in council and charged with specific ceremonial duties, which he undertook dressed in full military regalia. All the while he pressed for permission to travel inland with a party of miners, and after some time was given limited authority to do so. Lobengula agreed that a small group of white men might work on an old and abandoned mining concession at Tati, on the borders of Bechuanaland. This mine had lain deserted for years, but Jameson quickly sent word back to Kimberley and arranged for a group of 'miners' to occupy the facility and appear to be working it.

Towards the end of January 1890, after Jameson had been resident in Bulawayo for almost three months, a party of Royal Horse Guards arrived in the capital, entering the precincts in full regalia. Their purpose was threefold: to return the visit of the indunas to London, to present

Lobengula with gifts and to make formal notification of the Royal Charter. With this official notification came a royal despatch addressed to Lobengula, and written by Lord Knutsford in words chosen to impress the King with the gravity of the Royal Charter. Jameson, however, took no chances and substituted the letter for a forgery of his own, in which was relayed unqualified support for the Rudd Concession. He also added solemn warnings of Boer and Portuguese plans for an imminent invasion of Matabeleland.

Once the Horse Guards had left the scene, in the meanwhile, and the dust settled, Lobengula, struck with a sense of hopelessness and despair, lapsed into depression. To Jameson's complaints that the miners at Tati had unearthed no gold, Lobengula, in an apparently offhand remark, suggested that they ought to consider looking elsewhere. Jameson was astonished, but he immediately seized on the comment, indicating that the miners might go east into Mashonaland. To this Lobengula did not demur. Even as Jameson traced a few possibilities out on a map, Lobengula maintained a posture of tragic indifference. Jameson then ventured further still and secured an undertaking from Lobengula to provide labour to cut the road east. To this Lobengula applied only one pre-condition, that at all times Jameson accompany the party himself. After that Lobengula fell silent, and Jameson pressed him no further.



Doctor Leander Starr Jameson

11
The Birth of a Colony

Go north young man, your hinterland lies there – **Cecil John Rhodes**

In the meanwhile, back in Kimberley, Rhodes now began to give serious consideration to the practicalities of occupying Mashonaland. He first sought the advice of General Sir Frederick Carrington, an old imperial soldier at that time in command of the Bechuanaland Border Police, and the estimate that he was given was that at least 2,500 troops would be required to effectively occupy Mashonaland, at a likely minimum cost of £1 million. Rhodes, of course, was horrified. He was an extremely wealthy man, but his means were not limitless.

The story then goes that Rhodes happened one morning to be sharing a breakfast table at the Kimberley Club with a young man by the name of Frank Johnson. During the conversation, Rhodes mulled over some of his plans, and in particular the problem of mounting a viable expedition into Mashonaland. Johnson, although only twenty-four years old at the time, and between employment, suggested that Carrington was over cautious, and that given pen, paper and a quiet corner, he would within an hour or two come up with a much more reasonable figure.

Rhodes might easily have smiled, and dismissed Johnson as a young opportunist, but Rhodes had once been a young opportunist himself, and since then had made himself, and quite a few other opportunists very wealthy men. Thus, onto the stage stepped one of the principal characters of Rhodes' grand imperial adventure. Frank Johnson, the essential colonial fortune-hunter, would later be described by an acquaintance of both he and Rhodes as "a short, thickset, furtive-eyed, dark man, with lungs of the bulls of Bashan, and the knack of handling men and hustling things." It was precisely those lungs, this knack and the talents Rhodes discerned in him that would carry Frank Johnson through.

Young as he was, Johnson had already accumulated some worthwhile experience. At the age of sixteen, he left his native Norfolk to come to South Africa, where he enlisted for service in the much-storied Bechuanaland Border Police. There he saw active service on the Warren Expedition, the British military response to Boer and German ambition in southern Bechuanaland. At eighteen he formed a high-sounding syndicate

called the Great Northern Trade and Gold Exploration Company, which was established with the common objective of obtaining mining concessions from Khama and Lobengula. To this end, he also spent a long time in Bulawayo jostling for Lobengula's attention, but ultimately he fell foul of the King and withdrew. He later became managing director of the Gifford & Cawston organisation in Bechuanaland but was dropped without compensation on the eve of the amalgamation with Rhodes.

With a few friends, including Frederick Courtney Selous, the Selous Exploration Syndicate was formed, on the aforementioned principle that concessions could be negotiated with individual maShona chiefs without necessarily engaging with the amaNdebele. In due course, however, Johnson found himself at odds with Selous too, and nothing came of the venture. Selous then set off on further travels, cutting adrift his young partner to fall across the path of Cecil John Rhodes.

The conventional version of the story then has it that Johnson made the initial proposal to Rhodes that a lightning raid, utilising just 500 trained men, strike into Matabeleland with the limited purpose of killing or taking Lobengula hostage. However, the political ramifications of this would quite naturally have been incendiary, even if a commando of that size, without extensive logistical support, was able to pull it off. The chances were far greater that the commando would be annihilated, or would require a hugely expensive extraction. Johnson, however, suggested in his later memoir that Rhodes was inclined initially to support the proposal, and was only later persuade against it by Sidney Shippard and Sir Henry Loch, the latter the British High Commissioner to the Cape.

It was Frederick Selous who later advised Rhodes to plan prudently and to not underestimate any military threat from the amaNdebele. Even assuming a peaceful occupation, the main problem would remain Lobengula's expectation that any party entering the country would follow the road that led through his capital. The amaNdebele would then see for themselves that they had been lied to, and the result would probably be obliteration. Selous, therefore, proposed an alternative. He suggested the forging of new route entirely, one that would enter the country to the southeast, avoiding the amaNdebele heartland altogether. This plan was agreed to by all and was duly adopted. It was, nonetheless, still probable that the expedition would see at least some action en route, so detailed military precautions would still be needed.

Frank Johnson did his arithmetic and, as promised, presented Rhodes with a tender that pleased him very much. For the sum of £87,000, 80,000 acres of land and twenty gold claims, Frank Johnson proposed to construct a road from Palapaye to Mount Hampden and to lead there a body of 200 pioneers. Johnson later claimed that he made £20,000 out of the deal, which presumably did not include his land and mining claims. He then remarked that he had found just enough gold in the country to make a wedding ring for his bride, but that is almost certainly a wild understatement of the wealth that he eventually took away from the colony.

An advertisement, in the meanwhile, was placed in the press, and some 2,000 men applied to join the expedition. Rhodes then turned his mind to planning the future demographics of the colony that would bear his name, and in this regard, he had very particular ideas. As a minimum, the successful applicants must be able to ride and shoot, but the various trades and professions that would be necessary to build a country must also be considered. Central to this was the need for English-speaking men of a particular caste – what Rhodes often termed 'young men of good family'. By this he meant the disinherited younger sons of the British aristocracy, who could be relied upon to use their education and higher values, not only to raise the general standard of the population but also to make their fortunes. To this, there was the added advantage that parents of influence might pressure the Imperial Government to weigh in for their rescue if ever the need arose.

In due course, the 2,000 were whittled down to an eventual 196. These were what author and administrator Hugh Marshal Hole later described as a *corp d'elite* of farmers, artisans, miners, doctors, lawyers, engineers, builders, bakers, soldiers, sailors, cadets of good family with no particular occupation, cricketers, three parsons and a Jesuit.

Since no one could be certain how the mood of the amaNdebele would play out, Johnson tried to plan for every eventuality. With this in mind, the pioneers were obliged by their contracts to submit to military discipline. Each was issued with a modern Martini-Henri rifle and a six-shot .45 Webley revolver, plus a uniform consisting of trousers and tunic of brown corduroy with yellow leggings and regulation army boots. On their heads, they wore soft felt hats known widely as the 'Buffalo Bill'. A trooper's pay was seven shillings and sixpence a day with the additional

promise of 3,000 acres of land and fifteen gold claims. Officers, of course, earned a little more.

After kit distribution, the men were divided into three troops and given rudimentary military training. Troops ‘A’ and ‘B’ were mounted infantry, commanded respectively by Maurice Heany and an American ex-sea captain by the name of Skipper Hoste. An Irishman named Jack Roach commanded ‘C’ Troop, which was an artillery detachment equipped with two seven pounders, two machine guns and two twenty-four-pound rocket launchers. A unique addition was a 10,000 candle-power Royal Navy searchlight driven by a mobile steam generator.

Rhodes was generally satisfied with these arrangements, but he came under pressure from the office of the High Commissioner to recruit an additional 500-man police force for garrison duty and extra defence capability. This force was placed under the regular military command of Lt. Colonel E. G. Pennefather of the Inniskilling Dragoons. This body of men, included as an afterthought, would later become the genesis of the fabled British South Africa Police that would serve Rhodesia until 1980.

The amaNdebele, however, were not the only imponderable. Rhodes made some very curious and contradictory decisions in regards to leadership and command. As administrator designate, he chose veteran colonial civil servant Archibald Colquhoun. Colquhoun was a well-meaning and very able individual, but quite often misunderstood. He was a typical ‘sahib’ of the colonial service, who happily pictured himself in a viceregal role, with all the accoutrements of imperial authority. For the journey, he packed a consignment of 1,000 best and 1,000 ordinary Havana cigars, to which he added cases of whisky and champagne, as well as a vast selection of light delicacies acquired from Fortnum & Mason. In the fullness of time, Colquhoun would distinguish himself more as a traveller and chronicler than as a colonial administrator. By the time of his death, he had thirteen travel books in publication, including *Overland to China* (1901) and *Greater America* (1904). Mashonaland, even from a distance, could not have been a brilliant proposal for him, but at that moment, he was not in a position to be choosy. A long career in colonial administration, including service in Burma, India, China and Central and South America, had been beggared by a blunder that Jameson never tired of repeating.

As a civil servant in Burma, Colquhoun was attending to his correspondence one day when he accidentally slipped two letters into a

single envelope. The first was a response to criticism from his administrative superiors and was composed of suitably restrained language. The second, however, was a richly worded attack on local government policy in general, and his own department in particular which was addressed to the *Times* of London. To this letter, he added a careful postscript asking that the contents not be traceable back to him. The envelope was stamped and sent on to the head of his department. Not surprisingly, word came down a few days later that work in the private sector might be more to his taste.

It was the fact that Jameson dined out on this tale so merrily, and so frequently, that somewhat set the tone for the bad blood between them that would follow. Colquhoun, unfortunately, was a natural object of ridicule. Corpulent, chinless, bespectacled and over-serious, his copious intelligence generally did not shine through, and although intelligent he undoubtedly was, he was also bumbling and hapless and endlessly fastidious. Naturally, therefore, Jameson and he got off on the wrong foot, but Jameson was problematic in other ways too. He was added to the expedition because Lobengula had insisted that it be so, but it is true also that by then he was warming to the whole business, and no doubt, behind the scenes many conversations had passed between Rhodes and him. There now existed between the two men a unique understanding. Jameson was capable of gymnastic moral flexibility, while at the same time he grasped the more nuanced implications of Rhodes' planning instinctively. He was awarded no rank at all, but instead given an unspoken power of attorney over every aspect of the expedition, no matter what might be written or agreed elsewhere.

Colquhoun, in the meanwhile, was only to take up his duties upon arrival in Mount Hampden, so this left the question of leadership of the expedition in some doubt. Soon a quarrel broke out between Johnson and Pennefather, who both believed the role was their's by right. In the end, it was agreed that Pennefather would take command of the police and Johnson the pioneers. The only relationship to be established on an even keel was between Johnson and Jameson, both of whom got on very well indeed and remained fast friends for as long as they both lived.

Finally, Rhodes appointed Frederick Courtney Selous to the expedition as ordinance officer and guide. About this appointment, there was some necessary ambiguity and compromise. No love, of course, existed

between Johnson and Selous, and even less between Selous and Rhodes, but as far as they were all concerned, he was better in than out. Selous was a bitter critic of Rhodes, and distrusted his intentions, and was therefore interested in keeping a close eye on things. Rhodes, on the other hand, doubted Selous and wished to keep him under observation. Another point, of course, was that there was no man alive with the knowledge and experience to guide the expedition in, so it had to be Selous.

It might perhaps be worthwhile here to introduce Selous in more detail. Frederick Courtney Selous has emerged from the chronicles of local history as one of the most iconic white men of Africa. He was a hunter and frontiersman, a man's man to the core, and yet also a gentleman, a scholar and a philosopher. With a heavy elephant gun on his knee, he might be pictured reading Wordsworth or Keats and might glance up periodically to direct a line of porters, singing in natural harmony as they carried his ivory to the coast. More than any other, Selous defined the popular image of a great white hunter, and as such he inspired H. Rider Haggard in the creation of his famous hero Allan Quatermain.

There was, of course, more to it than just this. Selous was also a liberal, and although no less paternalistic than any other, he had a unique interest in the well-being of the maShona. As we have heard, he did not love Lobengula, who also disliked and distrusted him. This was simply because his position remained that the maShona were not subject to amaNdebele overlordship and that contracts and concessions agreed to by the maShona chiefs were valid independent of the amaNdebele. Lobengula, of course, could not tolerate this, because quite naturally his position was that the maShona were uniformly subject to his law, no matter what their internal political structure might represent. Selous was banished by decree from Bulawayo, under the threat of a fearful death, and thus things stood on the eve of the expedition.

This of course also did not sit very well with Rhodes. Rhodes held a concession from Lobengula, and it was based solely on this that he now laid claim to Mashonaland. A voice as influential and integral and Frederick Courtney Selous, heeded by liberal sentimentalists across the empire, was not helpful at all, so again, better in that out.

So much for the Pioneer Column as it formed up in Kimberley. On the wider stage, Rhodes' manoeuvres provoked a sense of urgency among many others who also had a claim to the central interior. Word reached

Kimberley that a private trek was assembling in the Transvaal, and would soon be ready to cross the Limpopo River into Matabeleland. At the same time, word reached Lobengula of the size and scope of Rhodes' expedition, and he knew he was dealing with something considerably more threatening than ten miners. Numerous warnings were issued, and threats that if preparations to enter his country were not halted immediately, all whites would be expelled from his territory.

To counter the first threat, Rhodes met the Transvaal President Paul Kruger and put it to him that he had little in the way of legal empowerment to interfere with the British occupation of Mashonaland, to which Kruger was forced to agree. This was the first meeting between these two men, and it set the tone for a future of absolute mutual loathing. Kruger was later heard to retort that he feared only four men, God, the Devil, General de la Rey and that damned Englishman Cecil Rhodes.

To deal with Lobengula, Rhodes needed only to dispatch a cable to Jameson in Kimberley, who paid a last flying visit to Bulawayo. Leaving Kimberley on 11 April 1890, he arrived in Bulawayo a fortnight later. Lobengula greeted him with friendship, but also with an air of finality, demanding once again that Rhodes himself come to Bulawayo to settle matters. Rhodes, however, had recently been elected to the premiership of the Cape, so a visit to Bulawayo was obviously out of the question. Besides, Jameson's visit on this occasion was intended less to mollify Lobengula than to threaten him. He allowed it to be known that if Lobengula refused to grant permission for the expedition to proceed, an armed confrontation would inevitably follow.

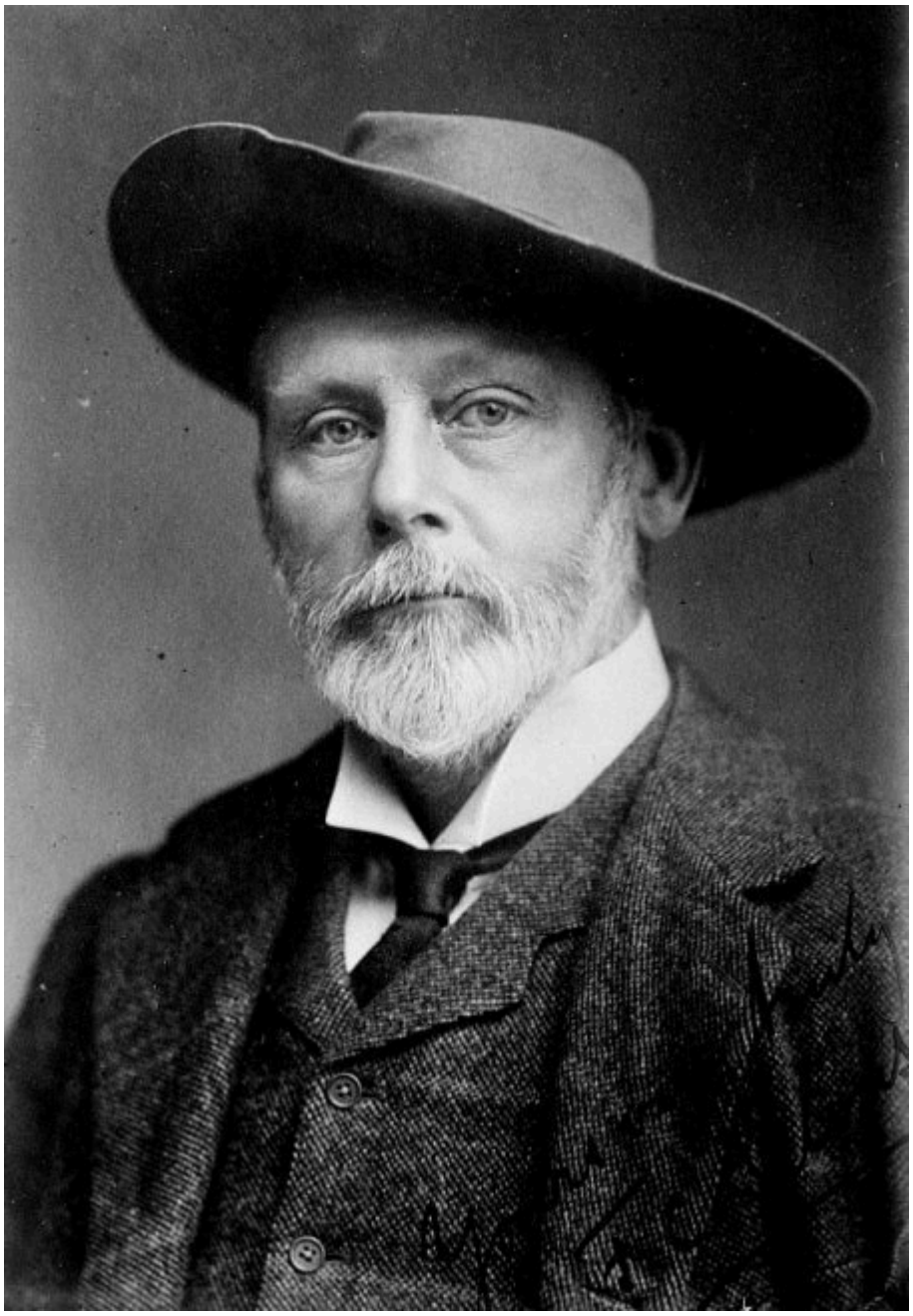
This was a different face of Jameson, and from Lobengula retreated, disturbed and dismayed. He must always have known that this day would come, but it nonetheless came as a shock. He reiterated, however, that the only road that he was willing to permit into Mashonaland was through Bulawayo, for he wanted to see with his own eyes the miners who were entering his country.

"The King told me that I might make the road." Jameson coldly insisted. "Did the King lie?"

For a long time, Lobengula pondered his reply before at last, he whispered: "The King never lies!"

Upon that, Jameson departed Bulawayo, never to see Lobengula again. Four days later, the British South Africa Company Pioneer Column

began moving out of Kimberley, heading through southern Bechuanaland in the direction of Matabeleland. Across the breadth of Matabeleland, in every military kraal, in every barracks, the tension mounted. Lobengula could field a constituted army of some 35,000 infantrymen, perhaps more, trained, motivated and deeply enraged. The Pioneer Column, on the other hand, comprised a little under 1,000 white men in 117 wagons, with livestock and retainers. Rhodes was quite clearly taking a monumental risk. It was a calculated risk, of course, no doubt about that, but an enormous risk nonetheless.



Frederick Courtney Selous

12
The Occupation

Why, if you say I have given you the whole country, do you come in like thieves to steal it; if it is really yours you do not need to steal it –
Lobengula

With the British South Africa Company Pioneer Column now poised on his border, it was possible for the first time for Lobengula to see the entire sham laid out unabashed before him. Indeed, the facts were at last there for the whole world to see, but by then, no one really cared. The attention of the British humanitarian movement had shifted to the Congo Free State, and with the controversy of the Rudd Concession and the Royal Charter eclipsed by this new and most glorious enterprise, Lobengula's voice was quickly lost in the excitement. It was still his belief, however, that if he could only alert Victoria, she would see at last the truth of his words. Mtshete was again instructed to travel to Cape Town, this time to plead with the High Commissioner Sir Henry Loch.

Although Sir Henry agreed, after a long delay, to interview Mtshete, he was willing only to emphasise both his and Her Majesty's unqualified support for Rhodes and his Chartered Company. At some point Rhodes himself was introduced into the meeting, and both men repeated the same essential platitudes. Sir Henry then addressed a letter to this effect to Lobengula himself, reassuring him, and adding that the armed members of the Pioneer Column were merely friends who desired only his good.

On receiving this letter, and the report of his ambassador, Lobengula could do little more than address a sarcastic, but nonetheless feeble communication to Jameson. On 30 June 1890, while the column was camped between the Motlutsi and Shashi Rivers, Jameson received the following brief:

"Why so many warriors at Macloutsie (sic)? Had the King committed any fault or had any white man been killed, or had the white man lost anything that they were looking for?"

To this Jameson replied that the soldiery was intended only for the protection of the column, and no hostile intention was directed towards the King or his people. After that Jameson ignored the gloom and protestations and pressed on resolutely with the business at hand.

Under the direction of Selous, and with the labour of a small army of BaNgwato tribesmen, the road ahead was cleared. Everybody, including the whites, laboured on this project. The column was typically spread over a distance of two to three miles, with livestock dispersed on either side, and sixteen oxen spanned in eight pairs hauling each wagon. The average daily distance was about twelve miles, and typically the column was on the move from dawn until early evening. It was Selous who usually selected the site for a laager, and there the bush was cleared left and right so that in an emergency the wagons could mobilise quickly in either direction. The laager was formed with the leading wagons marking the north side, the front wheel of the incoming wagon placed just past the back wheel of the wagon ahead. Cattle and oxen were tethered outside the laager while the horses were picketed inside. Four men slept under each wagon, and a roving watch was always alert to a sudden attack. All night a steam engine chugged, charging the searchlight that crept back and forth through the surrounding bush.

Of the amaNdebele, little was seen or heard, although scouts returned with frequent reports of a significant military expedition shadowing the column. No threat or hostility was reported, however, and the column continued on its way. The force in question was about 15,000-strong and divided into dispersed detachments and commanded by the Induna Gambo. On 6 August, when the column was somewhere between the Lundi and Tokwe Rivers, it was visited by the British South Africa Company agent in Bulawayo, Johann Colenbrander, who arrived in camp one evening carrying an ominous message.

“Who are you and where are you going?” Lobengula asked. “What do you want, and by whose orders are you here? Where are you leading your young men to like so many sheep and do you think they will get back to their homes again? Go back at once, or I will not be answerable for the consequence. Do you not think that white blood can flow as well as black?”

Lobengula was obviously reaching the end of his tether, and it is easy to imagine the pressure that he was under. It is, indeed, a testimony to the degree of his control over his army, and its discipline, that a slaughter had not already taken place. To Johnson and Selous, the promise was made that if they were captured alive, they would be flayed in the King’s presence. It was Colonel Pennefather, however, who replied. “I am an officer of the Queen of England.” He wrote. “My orders are to go to

Mashonaland, and there I am going. We do not want to fight, we only want to dig for gold, and are taking this road to avoid your young men – but if they attack us, we know how to defend ourselves."

Four days later, scouts sighted a fast-moving amaNdebele detachment of about of 2,000 warriors. Its activities were carefully observed, and it was determined to be moving broadly parallel to the column. It appeared that the impi was either waiting for an opportunity or for reinforcements. Two thousand men, however, would not overrun the column, but it could be expected that more were in the area. Then, a few days later, the impi abruptly disappeared. Nerves remained taught, however, as local villagers confirmed that several amaNdebele impis remained in the vicinity, in force, and were still intending to attack.

The Column, the meanwhile, was moving quickly through territory that was bound to be hostile, for it was indisputably within Matabeleland. Upon arrival on the highveld, however, the matter would be more opaque. Although Lobengula claimed Mashonaland as a vassal state, it was not Matabeleland, and his army would unlikely act to directly defend it. Once on the plateau, the Pioneer Column would be out of Matabeleland, and the pressure would be off. For the time being, however, the situation remained very tense indeed. Every night wagons were arranged in a wedge formation, with a seven pounder or a Maxim at each corner. The searchlight continued all night, and men stayed awake, alert to any movement. Every morning, however, the laager would cautiously disengage, and the column would reform to continue warily forward.

Eventually, the low escarpment of the highveld came into view, and within a few days, Selous had successfully guided men, wagons and livestock up through what came to be known as 'Providential Pass', and onto the cool uplands above. At the head of the pass a more casual camp for once sprawled across the veld, livestock were let out to graze, and the first cricket match held in the country was played. The site was named Fort Victoria, and a garrisoned of BSACo Police established. The Union Jack was hoisted, it was at this moment that it could reasonably be said that Mashonaland was a British territory. A hundred miles further north, Fort Charter was founded, and a second garrison established.

On 10 September 1890, Colonel Pennefather and Captain Ted Burnett, the Chief Scout, rode on ahead and crossed the Makabusi River, and there pegged a suitable site at what they believed was Mount Hampden.

It was not, however. Mount Hampden lay a few miles to the north, but this was to be the site of Fort Salisbury, and on 12 September 1890, the main column arrived. The site lay in the in the territory of an elderly Chief Harare, who observed the steady arrival of armed white men, horses and wagon in some perplexity.

The following morning, Lieutenant Edward Tyndale-Biscoe ran the Union Jack up a temporary flagpole, while before him, in neat ranks, stood the BSACo Police detachment. Prayers were led by the Reverend Canon Balfour, and a twenty-one gun salute fired, after which the Pioneers were released from their contracts, and invited to go forth and take up their land and gold claims.

13
A Land Bridge to the Sea

The splitting up of mankind into a multitude of infinitesimal governments, in accordance with their actual differences of dialect or their presumed differences of race, would be to undo the work of civilisation and renounce all the benefits which the slow and painful process of consolidation has procured for mankind – **Lord Salisbury**

At last Rhodes now had his toehold in the interior, but his thoughts were already running far in advance of this. British South Africa Company agents were already deep in the country north of the Zambezi. A British consul had taken up residence in the territory of Nyasaland, and Rhodes was now manoeuvring to gain control of what would soon be Northern Rhodesia, or the future nation-state of Zambia. This would place under British South Africa Company control all of the territories south of the Congo Free State, and west of German East Africa. It was a monumentally ambitious concept, but that was not all. To the east of Mashonaland lay Portuguese East Africa, its land boundaries ill-defined. An isolated body of white men stranded over a thousand miles from the Kimberley railhead would not survive for long. Fort Salisbury could be sustained in the short term only with highly inflated imports from the south, and the lack of direct access to the Indian Ocean tempted Rhodes to wonder whether he could prize a portion of the eastern seaboard from Portuguese control.

Although the Portuguese, based on historical occupation, claimed first rights to Mashonaland, in the light of the rules defined in Berlin in 1885, no practical occupation could be demonstrated, and certainly, no treaties of friendship with the native authority were known to exist. This, however, did not stop Portugal pressing this claim, and no small claim it was. The Portuguese Crown felt that it was owed the entirety of the south-central African interior based on ancient exploration and long defunct trade routes. Indeed, in 1885, the Portuguese government produced what was known as the ‘Rose Coloured Map’, which laid claim not only to Portuguese West and East Africa, but also everything in between, comprising territories that would in future be Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

It was a grand, but an ultimately hopeless claim and Rhodes simply ignored it, marching his occupying force directly into Mashonaland, tearing through the fragile fabric of Portuguese imperial dignity. Having got away with that, he now began to imagine that he could get away with more, by seizing the lands that abutted on legitimately held Portuguese territory to the east. The region in question was Manicaland, a belt of highland and mountains separating Mashonaland from the coastal plain. Geographically distinct from both, it was potentially both the Portuguese bridge into the interior and Rhodes' land route to the sea. Since neither party was in practical occupation of the region, it technically remained open to either.

Before the departure of the Pioneer Column, Rhodes issued written instructions to Archibald Colquhoun to proceed as early as possible to visit a certain Chief Mutasa, who was the ostensible ruler of Manicaland, and to secure from him the usual concession for mineral and prospecting rights. After that, a police garrison was to remain in the territory as an occupying force. This, in theory, would cut the ground from beneath the feet of the Portuguese. In further, *secret* instructions, however, Rhodes added that Colquhoun should endeavour to secure a 'right of communication' with the eastern seaboard, which, if at all possible, should include seizure of the port of Beira. This rather improbable command set the stage for a variety of diplomatic skirmishes, a handful of extraordinary personal adventures and a military clash or two along an ill-defined frontier. In the end, however, very little was achieved, and the natural border of high mountains prevailed by dint both of geography and international diplomacy.

What did emerge from these various contretemps, however, was the establishment of a unique foundation of heroism and bravado that would set in motion the long and colourful mythology of white Rhodesia. Ten days before the Pioneer Column arrived at the future site of Fort Salisbury, Colquhoun slipped away in the company of Jameson, Selous and a small detachment of police. Selous had by then resigned his commission, handing over his responsibilities to the American, Captain Ted Burnett, who guided the column on the last leg of the journey to Mount Hamden.

Frank Johnson, of course, was delighted that Selous had at last removed himself from the expedition. He had come to the conclusion that Selous was a fraud, and even fifty years later, when Johnson came to record his memoirs, his dislike of the charismatic hunter-guide had not diminished in the slightest. "Frankly", he wrote, "I was glad to see Selous gone. He

knew no more about the country we had come through than anyone else; he was not amenable to discipline, and he wasted a great deal of his time uselessly with a compass in the veldt."

For his part, Selous was just as happy to put the whole business behind him, for a few weeks at least, to ride out onto the open veld in the company of Colquhoun and Jameson, with both of whom he got on well. However, none of the ill feelings between Jameson and Colquhoun had yet healed, and the barbed exchanges traded incessantly between them began eventually to wear Selous down afresh. The problem, once again, was the ambiguity of Rhodes' orders, both spoken and written. Orders to secure a concession from Chief Mutasa had been handed to Colquhoun, and not to Jameson. Colquhoun was, therefore, determined to see the business through without Jameson's help, while Jameson, emboldened by his diplomatic victory over Lobengula, reinforced by the fact that Lobengula had *not* ordered the destruction of the column, felt otherwise. In his view, Colquhoun should mind his manners, enjoy his champagne and Havanans and leave the real work to men of wit and action such as he. Jameson believed that Colquhoun's officious and ponderous devotion to protocol would eventually frustrate the venture, and, in fact, as far as what Rhodes sought, he was absolutely right. Time, however, would also prove the accuracy of Colquhoun's oft-spoken conviction that Jameson's arrogance and over-confidence would one day be his ruin.

Nonetheless, despite all of this, the party found itself travelling over arguably the loveliest quarter of the country, during its most flattering season. An American trooper in the escort wrote later that the landscape reminded him of the prairie grasses of Kansas, with here and there a few trees. It was at the moment that the woodland trees of the highveld open their buds in a flush of rarest beauty. The plains were laced with clear streams, and hirsute with grassland that spoke to all of future fields, homesteads and pastures. The air was clean and crisp, with the blue line of mountains opaque in the distance. This was the fairer face of the land they had come to conquer, and it was just this magnificence of nature that would for the next ninety-years define to white Rhodesia the inimitability of the land they fought so hard to tame.

Colquhoun thought it some of the most charming scenery imaginable. From time to time he detached himself from his squabbles with Jameson to appreciate for a moment the fates that had brought him to this

extraordinary place. To his delight, however, Jameson, responding to a wager, jumped his horse over a fallen tree, took a tumble and broke two ribs. His determination not to be usurped, however, saw him weather another a few days, but eventually, he was forced to turn around and make his way back towards the column. He was, of course, mortified, and irritated, and determined as he trudged back that somehow he would get his own back on the pompous, and now insufferably self-satisfied Colquhoun.

The others, the meanwhile, pushed on, arriving in the vicinity of Mutasa's kraal a day after the Pioneer Column reached Fort Salisbury. What they found when finally introduced to Chief Mutasa was a native chief both wretched and timorous, old beyond his years, emaciated and alcoholic. To greet his guests, Mutasa was dressed formally in a Portuguese naval hat and tunic, and a leopard skin cape. Although not quite yet aware of it, it was Mutasa's misfortune to find himself squeezed between the escalating tension between British and Portuguese on this contested frontier. To his guests, he did not appear to be a man of impressive attributes, and like him, his people seemed both cowed and apathetic. He had until then enjoyed a relatively easy *entente* with the Portuguese, who fed him alcohol and cash in exchange for free trading rights, and periodic confirmations of allegiance. Otherwise, he was mainly left to his own devices.

Further south, in the region of modern-day Mount Selinda, a far more powerful neighbour, Chief Ngungunyane of the Shangaan, or Gaza people, maintained his seat of government. A diplomatic peace was in existence between the Shangaan and the Manica, which allowed Mutasa, at least for the time being, to enjoy all the benefits and suffer few of the hazards of his precarious situation. Manifestly, however, this comfortable state of affairs was about to change.

Mutasa was eager to assure Colquhoun that was under no political obligation towards either the Portuguese or the Shangaan, which was quite obviously untrue. As far as the Portuguese were concerned, enforcement against the tribes of the interior was customarily left in the hands of the *Praziero*, and in Mutasa's case that *Praziero* was Manuel Antonio da Sousa, who went by the *nom de guerre* of Gouveia. Gouveia had for many years ruled his own private trading empire centred on the isolated mountain of Gorongoza, and so long as he behaved himself, which he did, the relationship between Mutasa and he had been easy. Now, however, Mutasa

found himself obliged to consider which of the forces pressing him for allegiance was the most to be feared.

From Gouveia, he certainly had much to fear, for the Portuguese was a notorious cutthroat with a reputation for wanton savagery, which Mutasa was naturally reluctant to rouse. By comparison, Colquhoun's avuncular and paternal appearance inspired no terror at all. Mutasa, however, was shrewd enough to know that Britain was ultimately the higher power, and making a quick decision, he pleaded with Colquhoun for British Crown protection against Gouveia and the Portuguese, grandiosely swearing his eternal allegiance.

To Colquhoun, this was a rather unexpected pleasure. He arrived in expectation of the usual delays and procrastination of native diplomacy and was delighted to be able instead to spread before the chief a treaty document and guide his trembling hand in affixing his mark. Within a fortnight, he and Selous were back in Fort Salisbury, where Colquhoun triumphantly waved his concession under Jameson's nose. He also shrewdly returned one of Colonel Pennefather's senior officers, Major Patrick Forbes, to Mutasa's kraal, leading a detachment of sixteen men to keep an eye on Mutasa and monitor events in his kraal.

It was just as well that he did, for no sooner had Colquhoun disappeared over the horizon than Mutasa received a visit from Gouveia, and a certain Colonel Joachim Paiva D'Andrada, supported by a detachment of 300 Angolan levies. Mutasa in the meantime, tormented by doubt, and now that Colquhoun's visit was lost somewhat in an acholic haze, fell at the feet of his Portuguese visitors and begged their forgiveness. The Union Jack was unceremoniously torn down and replaced by the Portuguese flag, after which Mutasa was severely and publicly chastised.

All of this Major Forbes observed from a distance, lying low as he waited for reinforcements, which arrived just in time for a summit of local chiefs and headmen organised by D'Andrada. Evidently expecting no trouble, D'Andrada left his militia stood down and camped some distance away, and so Forbes, seizing the advantage, stormed the camp, and with just forty men, successfully put to flight a numerically far superior force. He then marched on Mutasa's kraal and dramatically arrested both D'Andrada and Gouveia, clapping both in irons and sending them back to Fort Salisbury. He then turned his mind to pressing home this advantage, as Rhodes had requested, by seizing the Portuguese port of Beira.

For the time being, Forbes, as lightly armed as he was, certainly did hold the balance of power. Nothing, in theory, stood between him and Beira, 150-miles or so to the east, and he was quite confident that Rhodes would back him to the hilt if he made a dash for it. Rhodes' thinking on the matter was that Lord Salisbury, although he would no doubt be irritated, would confirm a *fait accompli* if one was dropped in his lap. Forbes was a regular and disciplined soldier and could be relied on to do precisely as he was ordered, and these were Rhodes' standing orders.

Having left a small detachment of men to garrison the Portuguese fort at Macequece, and with another sent to escort the two Portuguese captives to Fort Salisbury, Forbes was left with a force of only six men.[1] Beira was well garrisoned with both white Portuguese troops and native levies, so even taking into account the perceived military inferiority of the Portuguese, it is hard to imagine how Forbes thought he would storm the settlement. He set off immediately, however, and marched his men the 150-miles or so to the banks of the Pungwe River. From there they set off downstream towards Beira in a handful of requisitioned native canoes.

Coincidentally, Doctor Jameson and Frank Johnson narrowly preceded Forbes and his detachment down the same river, in an expedition to test its viability as a river route to the sea. Jameson, convalescing in Fort Salisbury, was still ruminating bitterly over Colquhoun's coup, and the fact that he had neither been invited to command, nor even to accompany Forbes on his journey east to enforce the recently signed treaty. Colquhoun, it must be remembered, was now in charge, and his authority was legal and indisputable. Jameson and Johnson, in the meanwhile, formed a confederacy based on their mutual loathing of Colquhoun, and they both did what they could to frustrate and annoy him, which was not difficult. Together they hatched a scheme to sail down the Pungwe River in a collapsible boat that Johnson, with his keen eye for detail, included in the stores for just such an eventuality.

One of the region's principal waterways, the Pungwe River flows for a little over 300-miles, the last 100 of which sees it dispersed through an area of wetlands and swamps about which very little was known. The chronicles of the few hunters and explorers who had visited the flats to date reported a suicidal incidence of malaria and a plague of man-eating lions. Howard C Hillegas, a nineteenth-century hunter, author and chronicler, offered up this brief opinion of the valley:

"Notwithstanding the fact that almost every South African claims to have slain a lion at one time or another, those beasts continue to exist in large numbers in the Pungwe region…nowhere in the world is there anything comparable with this territory and its wild animals. Hunters who have been in the game districts of southern Asia, Australia, and the Western Hemisphere say that those fields are of insignificant value besides those of the east coast."

Although the region was and remains to this day an area of extraordinary natural beauty, there is no doubt that it was conceived by nature to be as hostile to the European temper as any place on earth. In fact, the entire coastal plain of Mozambique was an area of such poor health that early Portuguese convict-pioneers could hope to survive for perhaps a year before dying of some disease or another. The Pungwe drains this region, and few white men of average constitution could have hoped to complete a journey down its length without contracting, and very possibly dying of either malaria or blackwater fever. Circumstances happened to arrest Forbes' progress, but Johnson and Jameson took the river to its mouth and did indeed survive, which, if nothing else, proved to those who did not already know it that neither man suffered from an average constitution. While this feat of minor exploration has never held high status in the history of the region, by all rights, it should have.

By the beginning of October, Jameson felt well enough to travel, and so he and Johnson set off eastwards on horseback. A fortnight or so earlier a bullock cart had been sent ahead with the boat, and whatever kit and stores were needed. Colquhoun did not notice any of these arrangements being made, and was astonished, and irritated indeed when he heard that the two had left Fort Salisbury without notification or permission. As the travelling party approached the banks of the Odzi River, it was overtaken by a trooper, who saluted, and rather abashedly reported that he had orders from Colquhoun to arrest the principals and escort them back to Salisbury.

Jameson tore up the orders and threw them away, muttering that it had been he after all who had secured the damned fool his job. As far as he was concerned, Colquhoun could go to hell and take his arrest warrant with him. The trooper was sent back with this message, and the two men and the bullock cart forded the river and continued on their way. Their first stop in Portuguese territory was at the residence of the Governor General of the

Manica Province, where they lodged their horses before plunging into the adjacent wetlands on foot. Two distressing days were spent struggling through the heat and humidity, with the boat on their heads, and an expanse of pampas grass and bamboo lacerating their clothes and flesh. Finally, the main channel was located, and there they assembled and launched the boat.

Once afloat their journey progressed reasonably smoothly, until one night, when sharing a grass hut lent to them by local natives, Johnson knocked over a candle and started a fire that quickly engulfed the humble abode and all of those surrounding it. The two men managed to escape the blaze, but they did so dressed only in their underwear. Of the food supplies, just a tin of icing sugar was salvaged, along with a knife, a rifle and a bandolier of ammunition.

The situation had suddenly taken a very grave turn. A minor effort at amateur exploration had turned overnight into a desperate bid for survival. Neither man was entirely sure where they were, or where the nearest European settlement was. Although the local natives were well-meaning, they were primitive and unhelpful. The two now possessed one pair of boots between them and a single dress slipper, and all of their money had been burned. There was not much else to do but try and find humour in their situation, and as they launched their craft and set off down the river in their underwear, they unleashed a gale of gay but undeniably strained laughter.

Soon the pain of sunburn and clouds of mosquitoes began to wear their humour thin, and thinner still as they drifted into lion country. As Howard C. Hillegas had noted, the report of rifle fire in this region was so rare that lions were curious, and not in the least fearful of man. The channels were infested with hippopotamus and crocodile, and so neither the thought of making landfall or staying adrift was particularly appealing.

Despite all of this, however, and somewhat miraculously it must be said, the two arrived in the Pungwe estuary weak, starving and desperate. Before departing, Johnson arranged to have a ship collect them at the mouth of the river. It was evening before the first ocean breakers were sighted, and spotting the lights of the vessel beyond the first line of surf, the two were speechless with relief. Their small boat, however, was invisible from the deck, and before they could fix a bearing and strike out into open water, the ship’s lights were extinguished, leaving them floundering in darkness and heavy surf. It was by sheer luck that they identified the masthead against a moonless sky, and paddled desperately towards it. Having attracted the

attention of the crew, they gratefully clambered aboard the *Lady Wood*. It was a sober pair indeed who were told as they dried off that they had come within minutes of missing the boat.

The technical findings of the trip were inconclusive and worth very little. The Pungwe was deemed navigable for small craft only, and only along some of its length. The route would never come into use, and nor was any serious attempt ever made to open it up. In any case, five years later it would be superseded by the construction of a railway line.

In the meanwhile, as Doctor Jameson and Frank Johnson sailed south towards Cape Town in renewed comfort, sipping port and claret on the decks of the *Lady Wood,* Major Patrick Forbes was busy preparing his own expedition down the Pungwe River.

Forbes left the fort at Macequece 22 November 1890, setting off with his six troopers to march the thirty miles or so to the banks of the Pungwe River. It was a journey through heavily wooded hill country and forested valleys, seldom if ever visited by Europeans, and teeming with wildlife. While in Macequece, a reporter from the *London Times* arrived, and he determined to follow the raiding party to Beira, which he did, but he was taken by a lion early in the march, and presumably eaten.

Forbes, meanwhile, had neither Jameson's luck nor Johnson's bravado, and his journey would not progress very far. He was an officer of the regular British Army, so when an order from Colquhoun caught up with him forbidding him to continue, he had no option but to obey. Colquhoun had by then reached the conclusion that his future did not lie with the British South Africa Company, and he realised too that if Forbes' filibuster went wrong, as it was bound to, it would be he alone who would carry the blame. Rhodes could be relied on to disown any secret instructions, and after that, Colquhoun would probably never work again. As it was, the decision to recall the raiding party cost him dearly, for he brought upon himself a part, if not all the blame for Rhodesia never gaining her vital seaport. Soon he would find himself tossed into the dustbin of Rhodesian history, never to raise his head again.

The abandonment of Forbes' expedition did not, however, mark the end of Rhodes efforts to carve out a slice of the eastern seaboard. A second potential avenue was through a new treaty negotiation underway with the Shangaan chief Ngungunyane. This process had in fact been ongoing for some time, because, unlike Mutasa, Ngungunyane was the formidable

potentate of an aggressive and capable people. In charge of the expedition was a Dutch doctor by the name of Aurel Shultz, many years a resident of Natal, and a locally celebrated hunter, explorer and writer. He and Rhodes had been acquainted for some time, and as usual, Rhodes found himself fretting at the wastage of time when results were not achieved overnight.

Ngungunyane's territory straddled the disputed escarpment, spreading east to include most of present-day Maputo and Gaza provinces of Mozambique. What was of particular interest to Rhodes was that nominally his domain included the main Portuguese port of Delagoa Bay. If the port was claimed by a legitimate native authority, and Rhodes could acquire a concession granting him some sort of sovereignty over it, he could reasonably claim Delagoa Bay by right of treaty. Ngungunyane, however, was shrewder than Mutasa, and although no less alcoholic, was intimidated by neither the Portuguese nor the British, and he proved to be a much tougher nut to crack.

In Aurel Shultz, Rhodes made another excellent choice of negotiator. Even though it irritated him unbearably, Shultz's slow but persistent approach, and, of course, his medical skills, eventually won Ngungunyane over. It indeed took time, but if he lacked Jameson's mercurial brilliance, Shultz also lacked his unpredictability and regular lapses of integrity. Patient, thorough and not in the least self-serving, he laboured steadily over Ngungunyane's changing demands, forgetfulness and persistent insobriety. Once again, however, it proved to be the offer of firearms that won the day, despite the obvious risks that gun running into an internationally disputed territory would carry.

Within a few weeks, in the meanwhile, Jameson was back in Fort Salisbury. His journey took him via the Cape and Kimberley, where he and Rhodes were able to compare notes for the first time since the launch of the occupation. By now Jameson wholly and utterly embraced his new life as an imperialist, a frontier diplomat and man of action. News of the success of the Pioneer Column was by then international, and he was both wealthy and famous. It was the stuff of Victorian adventure novels, and it appealed acutely to the schoolboy in him. Men sought his company, bought him drinks and solicited his favours, and although behind his back there were more than a few who remarked that he seemed a little too big for his boots, he took no notice of that. He was in a self-congratulatory mood, sensing that he was capable of so much more. Both he and Rhodes were in

agreement that Colquhoun had to go, and Jameson undertook to make sure that, in one way or another, Colquhoun understood this fact. He then persuaded Rhodes to appoint him to the head of administration upon Colquhoun's departure, and with little hesitation, Rhodes agreed.

Rhodes, it must be said, was also in a somewhat self-congratulatory frame of mind, and enthralled at how the whole business had passed off almost without a hitch. He was thirty-seven years old, one of the wealthiest men in South Africa, and he had pulled off perhaps the most audacious imperial coup in the history of British Africa. It was extremely impressive, and inevitable that he would succumb a little to the hubris surrounding him. He was anxious, however, about the business of Shultz and Ngungunyane, and his instructions to Jameson were to make his way to Ngungunyane's kraal at the moment that he was back in the colony to hurry matters along.

Archibald Colquhoun, in the meanwhile, still rankling over the business of the flouted arrest warrant, was by then fully cognisant of the fact that Jameson had won the battle. He and Rhodes were now thicker than thieves, and there really was no place in this adventure for a man of orthodox views and a high moral threshold. While the two men maintained a cordial diffidence, each went about his own business, avoiding one another as much as possible in the close confines of Fort Salisbury. By dint of seniority, Colquhoun was the officer whose responsibility it was to visit the kraal of Ngungunyane, as per Rhodes' instruction, but he had no interest in that, and nor did he bother to query Jameson's preparations to do so. He might perhaps have mulled over the fact that planning such a journey in the teeth of the annual monsoon, which was due to break at any moment, was unwise indeed, and if he quietly hoped that Jameson would die somewhere out there in a chartless wilderness, it was no less than he deserved.

Jameson, in the meanwhile, set off early in the new year of 1891, with a lightly provisioned expedition consisting of four horses, three wagons and two white companions. The first of these was a young Scottish prospector by the name of Dunbar Moodie, who would later find fame as organiser of the first settler column to occupy Gazaland, while the other was a rugged young adventurer by the name of Denis Doyle. Until it reached the banks of the Sabi River, the expedition went smoothly, but swollen by torrential rain to more than a mile wide, and flowing swiftly, this usually languid river was now an obstacle indeed. To most men, it would have been insurmountable, but neither Jameson nor companions were

willing to turn back. They found a dugout canoe, and with great difficulty ferried across essential supplies over several trips. The wagons and horses were abandoned on the west bank and were probably ample reward to some person for the loss of a canoe.

The east bank, however, proved no less of a challenge, and before long, the three men found themselves struggling up the escarpment with the rains thoroughly upon them. Once on the high ground, however, they encountered flooded wetlands and swamps, and almost immediately they succumbed to malaria, with Doyle the worst affected. Near death, he was manhandled forward by the other two, who were only slightly less incapacitated than he. It began to seem this time that old Doctor Jim really had bitten off more than he could chew, but there were deeper reserves yet in this extraordinary man. He cajoled, dragged and willed his companions on, and on they struggled. It was indeed the stuff of Victorian comic book and legend, and vintage Jameson to the very core.

In the meanwhile, as the three adventurers battled nature in the trackless wilds of Gazaland, Rhodes received word from Shultz that an agreement with Ngungunyane had at last been reached. It was necessary now to ship the promised consignment of firearms as soon as possible, under the supervision of Rhodes principal secretary Frederick Rutherfoord Harris. Rhodes now was skating on extremely thin ice. Goading the Portuguese with diplomatic darts was one thing, but running guns into Portuguese territory was another entirely. The plan was simply to haul the consignment up the Limpopo River in a private river steamer to within portage distance of Ngungunyane's kraal and manhandle them from there.

There was always, however, something self-defeating about Rhodes' approach to intrigues of this nature. He revelled in the joy of the chase and was just not capable of keeping his mouth shut. News of the adventure naturally spread quickly, as Rhodes' 'young men', organising the whole enterprise, spoke about it no less freely, and before long the Portuguese authorities in Delagoa Bay were fully appraised. As Rutherfoord Harris made his way up the Limpopo River in a steamer laden with guns, a Portuguese river patrol boat was not far behind.

He and Shultz, however, successfully concluded the exchange, but as Rutherfoord Harris was about to begin the journey back to the Limpopo River, a treaty in hand, word reached him that three desperate white men, barely alive, had arrived on the edges of Ngungunyane's kraal. There,

skeletal, feverish, barefoot and reduced to rags, the three adventurers were lying on the floor of a hut. It certainly was a close run thing. Shultz later wrote of his utter astonishment that Jameson survived at all, but even more incredible, that after a few days of rest, and heavy applications of quinine and whisky, he was back on his feet and ready to return to the Cape. The three men then set off on the brief overland journey to the Limpopo, by then reasonably sure that the Portuguese would be waiting for them. Jameson took possession of the treaty document and entrusted it to one of his companions, probably Doyle, to carry overland to the coast.

This was wise, because Portuguese officials were indeed waiting for them at the river steamer, and although a thorough search was conducted, no trace of any treaty document was found. The three were then arrested and transported back to the coast, where they were roughly if briefly imprisoned. Rhodes, however, gaily negotiated their release, and after a sum of money changed hands, the three duly were released. Jameson then intercepted the treaty document and presented it to Rhodes upon his return to Kimberley. Shultz, who had done the hard work, was given little credit, and like Colquhoun, he disappeared soon afterwards into relative obscurity.

In the meanwhile, as all of this was taking place, the dust in Manicaland had settled somewhat. Since Forbes' recall, the small garrison at Macequece settled in on the quiet frontier, keeping an eye on things on the coastal plain below. The garrison was commanded a young Captain Herman Melville Heyman, the future Lord Melville, and for a month or two nothing happened. Portuguese civilians in the small trading settlement of Manica went about their daily business, and on the whole, the intercourse between the two sides was cordial and pleasant. Trouble, however, was brewing.

News of the unseemly arrest of Colonel Joachim Paiva D'Andrada and his deportation back to Portugal stirred up a hornet's nest of indignation in Portugal. Such a brazen insult touched the raw nerve of a people whose national prestige had for centuries been in decline. Forced already to back down over disputed Nyasaland, this latest British outrage, perpetrated with absolute disregard for Portuguese sovereignty, reopened a deep and festering wound. The government of the day fell, the British consulate was stoned, and members of the British community in Oporto forced indoors against insults, missiles and sometimes violence.

Then, for the second time, a body of enraged Portuguese citizens assembled an army to restore national pride, and meet British challenges to Portuguese colonial interests in East Africa. Jameson, gun running and the affair of the Shangaan Treaty would prove to be the last straw, and a subscription list was established for the purchase of a battleship. Students jostled to enlist and, by the beginning of 1891, it seemed entirely possible that Britain and Portugal were at war.

In late February 1891, what came to be known as the ‘student militia’ arrived in their battleship off the coast of East Africa, and despite diminishing ardour, mobilised and prepared to advance inland. In the interest of international relations, both the Portuguese metropolitan and colonial governments kept the whole business at arm's length, and as a consequence it remained for the time being an unofficial expedition. The diplomatic ramifications, therefore, were not as severe as they might have been, but nonetheless, Rhodes found himself under immense pressure from Whitehall to desist in all military adventurism and to leave international boundary disputes to the politicians, whose business it was.

Nonetheless, reports reached Captain Heyman’s garrison that an army of Portuguese irregulars was on the move. Withdrawing some distance to Mutasa’s kraal, he and his men settled in to observe. Days later, a demoralised and somewhat feverish force of students arrived at Macequece and were relieved to take occupation of the fort without a fight. At that point, they numbered about 500 men, some 100 of whom were students and the remainder native levies, all under the command of a regular army officer by the name of Colonel Ferreira. Captain Heyman then manoeuvred in the hill country overlooking the fort of Macequece and prepared his fifty troopers for engagement. Ferreira then issued a rather imperious ultimatum that Heyman ignored, and the following day the attack commenced.

By relaying false flag signals to imaginary reinforcements, Heyman immediately threw the enemy into confusion. Uncertain from where the attack would come, the Portuguese lacked direction, cohesion and indeed enthusiasm. They were armed with a brace of modern, quick-firing artillery pieces, but these remained at the fort lest they hinder a lightning advance. Without them, however, the attackers were vulnerable and were quickly cut down by a well-directed fire from entrenched positions. With the help of a few canisters from a seven-pounder, the advance was soon halted and then broken up and put to flight. The Portuguese then retired on the fort where

they quickly recommissioned their eleven-pounders, and a minor artillery duel commenced. With well-aimed fire, however, the BSACo. seven-pounder all but destroyed the fort, although it was put out of action itself later in the day by a lucky round. By then, in any case, the enemy was in utter shambles and was soon in swift retreat back towards the coast.

Heyman and his men were, of course, jubilant. Another spectacular victory was achieved with neither loss of British life nor severe injury. Also, several new artillery pieces were added to the Company arsenal, and Rhodes once again had a hot option for a few miles of the coast. Heyman quickly dispatched a patrol under Lieutenant Eustace Fiennes to try his luck at seizing Beira. Anticipating this, however, Sir Henry Loch, High Commissioner at the Cape, sent his military secretary, a certain Major Sapte, to Beira to intercept the raid, and order it back. Fiennes, junior in rank, and only in his early twenties, was wholly overawed and had no alternative but to withdraw and report back to Heyman.

When he heard the news, of course, Rhodes was furious. This was the second squandering of an ideal opportunity to seize Beira. Rhodes never forgave Fiennes and asked him later why he had not just slapped Major Sapte in irons and reported to the High Commissioner that he was drunk. Jameson would have done it, he grumbled, and almost certainly Jameson would have.

14
Settlement, Conquest and Subjugation

[Those] ...who expected to find gold in chunks ready to be picked up, squatted in their wagons and waited for the liquor to arrive – **Archibald Colquhoun**

Mashonaland was now, in practical terms, a privately owned and administered entity only nominally recognised as a British colony. As yet it had no governor, but only an administrator, and a small staff of frontier bureaucrats collecting a premium wage, and dealing with a very limited scope of administrative responsibility. A trickle of new arrivals kept numbers steady, but those entering roughly equalled those leaving, and in general, the colony staggered through its first year supported mainly by the Company purse. Conditions were, of course, rudimentary, supplies scarce and always expensive, and complaints fertile and abundant. Everyone, including Company officials, had something to say about the deficits of the British South Africa Company, and a general antipathy towards the organisation began incubating almost immediately.

Regarding their contracts, ordinary 'pioneers' were promised 3,000 acres of land and fifteen gold claims each. However, to be regarded as a *bona fide* land claimant, a pioneer was required to be in actual occupation of his land, and unless his fifteen claims happened to be on the same ground, it was either one or the other. Most pioneers signed on to get rich quick, and in the first instance most forgot about the land and applied themselves to the gold. In the end, however, many ended up with neither, since gold proved elusive and the land difficult, unyielding and unhealthy. Many simply looked around and acknowledging the measure of things, and then packed up and left.

Fort Salisbury, in the meanwhile, began its existence in two camps. Frank Johnson, and Captains Maurice Heany and Henry Borrow, identified a small outcrop, the 'Kopje', as their preferred campsite. It had good views, was easily defensible and in that district, they pitched their tents. A few others joined them but most prefered to put up around the police camp, in the vicinity of the flagpole, where the temporary offices of the administration were erected. The distance between the two camps was about two miles, and each began a haphazard and rather organic growth.

The final location of the city was yet to be established, and so no formal surveying or marking had yet taken place. Besides the administrative headquarters and the police barracks, all initial construction tended to be crude and temporary, since anyone venturing to build anything more substantial risked losing it should the site be moved. However, in due course, the settlers took the attitude of 'to hell with the Company', and the streets of a town began to emerge with no formal plan or any particular civic signature.

Colquhoun and Jameson, of course, remained at one another's throats, so the administration began in paralysis, and continued in that way for quite some time. The shrewder among the emerging business community, however, were prepared to bet that the prime location would be Johnson's 'Kopje', so the tussle for land in that quarter was brisk. A commercial district quickly formed around the first rough thoroughfare leading from the Police Camp to the Kopje, appropriately called 'Pioneer Street', and this proved wise. Before long a survey of the Kopje was underway, which caused the value of stands already claimed to shoot up, and early profits were made trading a dusty acre or two of this district to unsuspecting newcomers. Within a year, permanent structures of farm brick and corrugated iron began replacing mud and thatch, and soon, on either side of Pioneer Street, a welter of bars, restaurants, attorneys, traders and a Chinese washer plied a brisk trade.

About a year later, the Administration did indeed change its mind, but not in a significant way. It was agreed that a new site would be surveyed on the far side of the 'vlei', an area of grassy wetland slightly to the north of the current settlement. It was an unhealthy quarter that required draining, but once drained it would be the ideal location for the city centre. A drainage ditch was dug, which then became the main thoroughfare, appropriately named the 'Causeway'. Pressure was then brought to bear on those already established around the Kopje to move, but most refused, demanding that the Company pay damages, which of course it refused to do. In the end, the Kopje became the central business district and Causeway the administrative quarter. The Fort, which was the first police camp, was turned into the first public square, named 'Cecil Square' after the son of Lord Salisbury, one of the early directors of the British South Africa Company.

The first residential districts began to appear to the east of Cecil Square, and to the north, in what came to be known as the ‘Avenues’. Streets were named after the likes of ‘Jameson’, ‘Selous’ and ‘Rhodes’, with others like ‘Charter’ and ‘Concession’ that have since disappeared into history. Company directors were also honoured, with names like ‘Fife’, ‘Clarence’, ‘Cecil’ and ‘Abercorn’ featuring in almost every settlement, while others more obscure were ‘Stanley’ and ‘Livingstone’, the two great explorers, ‘Gordon’, the hero of Khartoum, ‘Rezende’, a rather unimportant Portuguese colonial administrator, and, of course, ‘Moffat’, ‘Colquhoun’ and ‘Beit’.

In the early days, no white women whatsoever were permitted to enter the colony. Rhodes, in keeping with his general dislike and distrust of women, issued an edict that, due to the rigours of pioneer life, neither women nor children were to be allowed into the colony until it was civilised enough to receive them. This, however, did not discourage a fallen French aristocrat by the name of Edmond, Vicomte de la Panouse, who conspired to smuggle into the colony his consort, an Englishwoman by the name of Francis ‘Fanny’ Pearson. Disguised as a man, and calling herself ‘Billie’, Fanny Pearson, who was probably in her late twenties, arrived in Fort Salisbury and settled quietly in an area to the northeast of Salisbury. She was, of course, almost immediately exposed, but no action was taken. The Vicomte and ‘Countess Billie’ then purchased a sizable piece of land to the north of the city, which they called ‘Avondale Farm’, later to become one of the capital’s most pleasant suburbs. Countess Billie was followed a little later by Mrs Pascoe, wife of Major John Pascoe, founder and the first member of the local Salvation Army. The next to arrive was a brace of Dominican Sisters, who founded the first hospital and school, where, incidentally, Mrs Pascoe became the first white woman to give birth in the colony.

In the first year of its existence, the administration was the mainstay of the Fort Salisbury economy, and it was before the administrator one morning that a tall and fair youth by the name of William Ernest Fairbridge appeared. The young Fairbridge found Archibald Colquhoun languishing in his crude ‘pole and dagga’ offices, from where law, justice, civic administration and taxation were administered.[2] Colquhoun was in residence, but largely supine, and brooding darkly over his ongoing quarrel with Jameson. News had recently reached him of Jameson’s successful

sortie into Gazaland, along with the mixed blessing that his nemesis had survived. The rain that lashed Jameson and his party, of course, also deluged the settlements, and for that first season, most settlers huddled under thatch or canvas, wondering in their abjection why no one had thought to warn them.

Like everybody else, Archibald Colquhoun was relieved that the first wet season was over and that the dry and pleasant winter months were at last upon them. Communications were once again open, and fresh supplies were getting through. No one had so far been murdered by the natives, the amaNdebele had launched no attacks, and apart from the usual high rate of mortality from malaria, and a general feeling of dissatisfaction, all appeared to be well. A year had passed since the first raising of the flag, and the colony was well and truly open for business. Fort Salisbury was now merely Salisbury, and from a dangerously isolated group of men camping out in the wilderness, the settlement was emerging as a community, spreading its roots deep into the surrounding countryside.

Colquhoun listened with amused lethargy to his young visitor's proposal to start a newspaper in the colony. It seemed like a good idea, and he certainly could think of no reason why not. Besides, Rhodes himself appeared to be behind the venture, and if it interested Rhodes, it would inevitably come to pass. Colquhoun allocated Fairbridge a hut on the Causeway and allowed him to pick through the remains of a cyclostyle machine that Frank Johnson had brought up from Kimberley. With no other means of printing a word, Fairbridge accepted the gift, moved into his offices and set the work publishing the first edition of the *Zambesian Times*. The *Zambezian Times* would soon be renamed the *Mashonaland Herald*, and later still the *Rhodesia Herald*. As with all things in the new colony, and as Colquhoun suspected, Rhodes' hand could be traced to the root of it. The arrival of the press in the colony also settled the question of its name. Rhodes preferred 'Zambesia', and Jameson 'Charterland', but Rhodesia became the preferred journalistic nomenclature, and when the name of the *Rhodesia Herald* was settled, so in *de facto* terms was the name of the colony.

William Fairbridge was an employee of the *Argus* Group of newspapers, based in Cape Town. The proprietor, Francis Dormer, was a close friend of Cecil Rhodes and had been since the two met on board ship as Rhodes was returning to the Cape from his first term at Oxford. Rhodes

was by then an old Africa hand, and well on his way to amassing his fortune, while Dormer, more or less the same age, was an immigrant on his way to take up a position on the staff of the Educational Institute of Cape Town. The two became friends, and before disembarkation, Rhodes offered Dormer any help that he could if ever it was needed.

Dormer's career in education was brief, and from the Cape Institute he went on to try his luck in journalism. He temporarily joined the staff of the *Queenstown Representative* before moving on to cover the Anglo-Zulu war for the *Cape Argus*. At the end of that episode, he took up the position of a sub-editor, and in due course, he was promoted to editor. A few years later, the owner of the *Argus*, the famous South African publisher and politician Saul Solomon, retired and put the business up for sale. Sensing his opportunity, and remembering Rhodes' offer, Dormer paid the young diamond magnate a visit.

Rhodes was by then campaigning for his seat in the Cape Parliament, and he was not blind to the benefits of an interest in an influential newspaper. He backed Dormer with capital, acquiring thus a stake in one of the most enduring and respected publishing names in southern Africa. It is perhaps interesting to also observe that from this base, Rhodes lent his support to numerous emerging black newspapers in the Cape, and for much the same reason. The famous Cape colour-blind franchise, still then in effect, required white political aspirants to be mindful of the black vote, and Rhodes indeed was that.

In the meanwhile, under the broad terms of the Royal Charter, Rhodes was empowered to do almost anything that he wanted north of the Limpopo, which included starting a newspaper. To realise this thought, he naturally approached Dormer and called in the favour. The *Argus* board took up the question and agreed that the venture would be of benefit to all. Rhodes, in turn, agreed that the Company would offer facilities to no other applicants, and before long the project was underway. Without a rail link or any heavy transport, moving plant and equipment up into Mashonaland was quite clearly out of the question, so William Fairbridge was plucked from his position as a contributor to the *Argus* in Kimberley and sent north with the best of British luck.

He began by examining Frank Johnson's old cyclostyle machine, and having mastered the mechanics of it he discovered that it had no roller. By boiling up animal bones, however, and adding some imported treacle, he

was able to mould a workable alternative inside a cylindrical German sausage tin. He then begged and borrowed paper, and with these simple means began to print his newspaper from a small pole and dagga hut on a dusty stretch of the Causeway. Much trial and error, therefore, went into the publication of the *Herald*, and while the first editions were understandably very crude, Fairbridge's early mistakes were on the whole less technical than editorial. One such error was to feature the British South Africa Company crest on the banner of his first edition, with its motto of 'Justice, Freedom, Commerce'. This immediately alerted the settlers to a pro-Company editorial bias, which was, of course, not the case at all, proven by the fact that Company employees and administrative personnel also felt slighted and lampooned, which probably was true.

What the arrival of a newspaper in the capital did reveal, however, was just how deep popular hostility towards the Company ran. The letters to editor section quickly degenerated into a litany of complaints, mostly centred around a complete stagnation of the economy, and in the absence of gold, the obvious question of what was everyone doing there? In fairness, however, the occupation had proved to be a mixed experience for everyone, but for some more than others. Those that filtered out into the countryside tended to suffer the most, and if nothing else, most were shocked by the severity of the first wet season. This immediately shattered the description of Mashonaland included in the press advertisement as 'a happy combination of Canaan, Ophir and the Black Country'. It certainly looked something like that in the beginning, but at the moment the rains broke, the whole was transformed into wetlands, swamps and swollen rivers. Mosquitoes and rats, also never mentioned in the promotional advertisements, tormented everyone, and the death toll in that first year from malaria and blackwater fever was sobering to all.

Most depressing of all, however, was the fact that not a single significant gold strike had so far been recorded, and many settlers and pioneers justly felt duped. Rhodes had promised gold, the entire enterprise was premised on gold, and resentment was now palpable, and growing. More or less as soon as the first wet season passed, a public gathering was scheduled so that a general recapitulation of a year in-country could be held. It promised to be a stormy affair which Jameson adroitly sidestepped on a plea of some urgent business or other elsewhere. Colquhoun was by then back in Cape Town waiting to embark for England, and so it fell to the

unfortunate Frederick Rutherfoord Harris to represent the Company. The principal speaker was to be Advocate A.H.S Bird, supported by the settlement's medical expert Dr Rand, and a certain Mr F.E Lochner.

Bird began by assuring Rutherfoord Harris that he felt no antagonism towards the Company or any of its officials. This, no doubt, Rutherfoord Harris was pleased to hear, but he was to suffer a scathing attack on himself and the Company nonetheless. The theme of the attack was an interesting one. The Company forbade any interference by anyone with the Great Zimbabwe monument. Rhodes more or less quarantined the site from any public access so that an archaeological survey, paid for by himself and undertaken by archaeologist Theodore Bent, could be completed. He was extremely interested in preserving the ruins, and no less interested in what artefacts it would yield. The monument, however, was under attack by frustrated settlers searching for gold objects to be melted down and sold. By way of a warning, the Company published a notice to the effect that persons caught removing relics from the site would be deported from the colony immediately, and without appeal.

Advocate Bird presented this edict as proof of a dictatorship, fine if one was administering on behalf of natives, but no form of government for a settled white colony. In light of the recent depredations suffered by the settler community, he declared that it was wholly unreasonable to prevent people from making a living by any means available. The attack concluded with much table pounding and indignant applause from the audience. In response, a beleaguered Rutherfoord Harris stood up and did his best to reply. Jameson, of course, would have done better, and indeed, it is unlikely that anyone would have dared address Jameson so roughly.

Nonetheless, all of this William Fairbridge faithfully reported, publishing all the details in the Saturday edition. A few days later he was visited by the Government Attorney, Alfred Caldecott, who notified him that the government would implement action against the *Herald* for libel unless an apology was inserted for erroneous reporting. Fairbridge published no apology, and no action was taken, but sides were drawn, and as often as not, both sides saw William Fairbridge as the enemy.

A month after this incident, the *Herald* reported Cecil Rhodes' imminent arrival in the territory. It was to be the founder's first visit, and apart from his natural desire to see the territory for himself, he also wanted to assess the situation after the first year of activity. He was not altogether

surprised to find the erstwhile Pioneer Corps in generally poor physical and moral condition and disillusioned almost to a man. Later he described the situation to his shareholders this way:

"[I found] a discontented population of about 1,500 people, and an expenditure of about £250,000 a year upon police. Things looked rather bad, because it was not only the large number of police, but also the feeding of them, which had to be done by carting the food 1,700 miles from the coast. Doctor Jameson and myself have talked matters over, and he said, 'If you will give me 3,000 pounds a month I can pull through.'"

Rhodes, of course, heard many complaints about William Fairbridge, and he took sides with his administration against the *Herald*, expressing unhappiness with the independence of the newspaper's editorial policy. Like Caldecott, he felt that Fairbridge's reporting of the delicate balance of public opinion served only to inflame an already challenging situation. Within a few days of his arrival, Rhodes summoned Fairbridge to visit him for a 'chat'. Arriving at Jameson's tent at the appointed hours, he found Rhodes seated at a table, Jameson standing behind him. Rhodes greeted his visitor courteously, before proceeding directly to the point.

"All these things", he told Fairbridge, referring with a sweep of his hand to the discontent of the settlers, "mean money, and the Company hasn't any."

Fairbridge replied that the Company's problems were not his.

"Do you know that we can deport you?" Rhodes asked him.

"Oh, yes, I know." Fairbridge replied.

"Well, what would you do?"

"You would have to give me a first-class train fare to the coast and a first-class passage to England, and there I would state my case on behalf of the settlers."

Rhodes then turned to Jameson. "There Jameson", he said, "I told you so."

Fairbridge was allowed to remain in the colony and was never again interfered with by Rhodes, the Company or the settlers. He was left to expand and develop his publishing enterprise in peace. This was fortunate, for in the following year events of enormous magnitude would overshadow the mediocre squabbles between administration and settler, and would give Fairbridge a great deal more to report on than an editor in his second year of publication had any right to hope for.

All of this infighting between the Company and settlers had the effect of diverting attention away from the natives. The arrival of the white man was greeted by the maShona with ambivalence. No effort at armed resistance was, of course, attempted, and the first and most obvious effect was the benefit of law and law enforcement. In practical terms, this meant an end to decades of amaNdebele predation, which was undoubtedly a good thing. Very quickly after that, the maShona began to emerge from a fugitive condition, re-establishing community, and generally enjoyed the benefits of trade, employment, cash and modernisation. Such a vast resource of land still existed that no particular pressure was felt at that stage, and on the whole, the attitude of both sides, white and maShona, was live and let live.

The amaNdebele nation, on the other hand, was an entirely different prospect, and a great deal more force was gathering in that quarter. From Lobengula's standpoint, the situation was moving from bad to worse. His agreement with Jameson that the Company might look 'elsewhere' had been mainly premised on the fact that he doubted it would. When it did, however, he hoped that shadowing the column with a substantial military force would oblige the white men to turn back. Now, far more than digging a few holes and clearing a bit of land, the whites were growing in strength, consolidating their two settlements at Fort Victoria and Fort Salisbury and settling an ever-widening belt of the countryside.

To thwart this steady expansion, Lobengula made a weak attempt to try and beat Rhodes at his own game. Aware of the competition that still existed between the agents of British and German interests, he decided that if he could play one off against the other, the two might ultimately cancel one another out. On the advice of Renny-Tailyour, still a force to be reckoned with in Bulawayo, he awarded a second concession to the E.A. Lippert Corporation that theoretically superseded the Rudd Concession.

Among other things, the Lippert Concession granted the holder the right to allocate land in Mashonaland for 100-years, which, of course, had a limited legal basis since Lobengula had already undertaken, under the Rudd Concession, to grant no land to anyone without the consent of the British South Africa Company. Rhodes could have approached the problem in a number of ways, not least to ignore it, but characteristically he opted for the payoff. He offered Lippert £30,000 for his concession, to which Lippert readily agreed. For both men, it was an excellent arrangement. Lippert walked away with an easy mark while Rhodes gained the right to allocate

land throughout Mashonaland for 100-years. Lobengula, needless to say, achieved nothing. In fact, at that moment, it would be fair to say that he lost the future altogether.

15
The Matabele War

The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilised mankind under debt to him. American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori – in each case the victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people – **Theodore Roosevelt**

There were many reasons why war between the settlers and the amaNdebele was inevitable, but the main reason was that the amaNdebele knew no other way. It was how they had been wrought, it was how they lived, and it would be how they died. It is also a fact that the amaNdebele failed to appreciate the lesson visited upon them by their first encounter with firearms, believing still in the capacity of their army to overrun and drive out a handful of lightly armed whites.

From the Company's standpoint, especially before the purchase of the Lippert Concession, a war of conquest would have cut through all the difficult problems associated with the Rudd Concession. Moreover, on 9 May 1891, an Order in Council of the British Parliament declared southern 'Zambezia' to be a British protectorate. This was potentially a problem, because if Matabeleland, then why not Mashonaland. And indeed, while the Company had the right to send men into Mashonaland for the purposes of occupation, it did not possess any judicial or administrative powers over anyone within the colony. A war of conquest would not only give the victors authority to govern, but it would add Matabeleland to the British South Africa Company portfolio. There was no fear on the part of Jameson *et al* that a war would be lost, all that was important was to ensure that the victor was the Company and not the Imperial Government. If Her Majesty could claim conquest of Matabeleland, the territory would become a Crown Protectorate, and gone would be Rhodes' private colony of Rhodesia

Not to be forgotten was another factor of equal weight pointing towards war. With the dearth of good financial news coming out of the colony, trade in Company shares on the London Exchange had begun to dwindle. Rhodes attempted to counter this by arranging for society

journalist Randolph Churchill to tour the territory on the understanding that he would write optimistic articles. However, Churchill played the spoiler and did the opposite. He found Rhodesia to be what he called a 'dystopia', and he lampooned, ridiculed and diminished everybody and everything that he saw, concluding his various submissions with the comment that the colony was neither Arcadia nor an Eldorado. With this sort of negative press now adding to the gloom, it became clear to the Company's board that something needed to be done. The expenses of the enterprise so far, including the costs of maintaining the forts, construction of the railway, the telegraph and the armed forces, ran to upwards of £700,000, for which there was nothing to show except a yawning deficit and an unhappy population of settlers.

Rhodes sat Jameson down one day and tried to drill economy into him. Of the 3,000 or so settlers who had responded to the call, 650 were police. These men were kept on at the cost of between £150,000 and £200,000 per annum. Jameson duly reduced police numbers down to only 150, later composing a thoughtful telegraph to Rutherfoord Harris airing the merits of war on the Company's diminished stock capital and prospects.

"Rhodes might consider the advisability of completing the thing." He wrote. "The cash could be found, and it could be done pretty cheaply if the Matloutsie Police and the High Commissioner keep out of it. We have an excuse for the row over murdered women and children now and getting Matabeleland open would give us a tremendous lift in shares and everything else. The fact of its being shut up gives it an immense value both here and outside."

It is difficult to understand then why Jameson and Rhodes should have agreed to reduce the colony's defences so drastically when there was every indication of war. Lobengula was still trying to make a significant point of asserting his rights over the maShona, and on one occasion sent a small impi as far north as Lomagundi, to punish a local chief for a minor infringement. Such severe incursions as this were rare and indulged by the administration as much as possible. There was, of course, was no formal border between the two territories and minor raids and bouts of killing along the grey line between Company and amaNdebele control were frequent and ongoing.

What liberties the maShona clans were now emboldened to take with the amaNdebele, they took no less with the settlers. Having been

beaten down so cruelly in the past, any relaxing of the regime was an invitation to crime. Stock theft, and indeed any kind of theft was rampant in the countryside. Such commodities as tools and wire were irresistible, and as the telegraph arrived in the country, the lifting of miles of copper wire became almost routine. On a few occasions, Jameson dealt only slightly less harshly with miscreant maShona chiefs than did the amaNdebele.

In the meanwhile, Lobengula and Jameson reached a modus vivendi regarding the boundaries of one another's jurisdiction. This was a line following the Tokwe, Shashi and Umniati rivers. In their first season of no raiding, Lobengula occupied his forces by garrisoning this line with regiments stationed fifteen to thirty miles apart. This presented its own peculiar difficulties, however, for to define a border implied acknowledgement of a neighbouring state, and Lobengula was unable to do that. Instead, he did his utmost to try and honour the boundary, and although raids across the Shashi River did occur, they were generally limited, and Jameson, for the most part, tried to ignore them.

At the ostensible core of this tension lay the tendency for the maShona to make use of their new circumstances to perpetrate mischief in a manner that annoyed both European and amaNdebele. In the case of the theft of copper wire, this was more than just an annoyance, since it compromised communications and cost the Company a great deal of money. For it to be clearly understood that the practice must cease, fines and other consequences tended to be harsh. One particular penalty, however, was satisfied in maShona cattle that in fact belonged to the amaNdebele. Lobengula frequently lodged cattle with maShona herdsmen, and this was one such herd. The culprits explained the loss to Lobengula by claiming that the Company had stolen the cattle. Lobengula was initially outraged and complained bitterly to the High Commissioner in Cape Town using the cable telegraph. He soon learned the truth, however, and decided once and for all to make an example.

For a month or more nothing happened, then Lobengula unexpectedly deployed a more aggressive force than had been seen for quite some time. His intention was not only to deal with the errant parties but also to send a general message to all the maShona in the territory that they still lay under his jurisdiction. This was a highly provocative move and suggestive of tremendous internal pressures that Lobengula was under. Probably hoping that Jameson would accept the raid for what it was,

Lobengula put his men under sentence of death should any violent action be directed against whites. In the beginning, Jameson did take a pragmatic view, but some loosening of Lobengula's authority was evident in the conduct of various detachment commanders who routinely exceeded the rules of engagement. Thus, as the raid gathered momentum, Jameson was forced to think again.

The impis fell on the tribes in the vicinity of Fort Victoria with sudden and shocking ferocity. Whites observers were appalled at the violence, and the wanton and apparently senseless torture and killing of men, women and children. Large numbers of maShona cattle were appropriated along with many belonging to white farmers. Jameson, although still playing the incident down, was just as appalled as he rode into Fort Victoria, and saw for himself the level of carnage. He immediately understood that if a war was not inevitable, then at least a significant turning point had been reached. It was a very sober Jameson indeed who dismounted his horse outside Town Hall that afternoon of July 17.

As soon as he had composed himself, however, Jameson sent for the commander of the impi, and in an hour or two, he received an induna called Manyau, or Manyewu. The man listened politely but denied any knowledge of borders. Accompanied by a younger and considerably more aggressive induna called Umgandan, and with the support of a letter apparently written by Lobengula outlining the objectives of the raid, Manyau maintained his right to proceed as he had been ordered. He also made the demand that all maShona refugees in Fort Victoria be handed over to his impi, whom he would kill downstream of the river in order not to contaminate the drinking water of the town.

Realizing that he was getting nowhere, Jameson fell back on an ultimatum, allowing Manyau an hour to lead his detachment back across the border, failing which he would send out Captain Charles Frederick Lendy with an armed patrol to enforce his instructions. In the event, he allowed two hours to pass before Lendy was given his orders.

Lendy had not advanced far before he came upon a bloody attack in progress and taking this to be an act of hostility he opened fire. Later he maintained that the amaNdebele fired on his men first, but this remains in doubt and was probably not true. Umgandan and an unstated number of his men were killed in a sharp exchange of fire before the remainder of the attacking force retreated back into Matabeleland. War, however, was now

inevitable, and after that Jameson wasted no time in turning his mind to the practicalities of it, and more importantly, how it could be turned to the Company's advantage.

As soon as Rhodes received word of this, the publicity machinery of the Chartered Company swung into action. The financial impact on an otherwise uncommitted board of directors was eased when Rhodes offered to underwrite the expense of an expedition from his own pocket. Any other critics were either silenced or ignored. On 14 August 1893, the Victoria Charter was instituted, guaranteeing each volunteer not only any 'loot' that he could lay his hands on, but also twenty gold claims and a 6,000-acre farm in Matabeleland. The entire amaNdebele nation was suddenly up for plunder, and the race was on.

In October, Lobengula attempted another plea to Sir Henry Loch, dispatching an embassy of two senior indunas and a young relation to deliver the message on his behalf. Tragically, the three were left unattended one night in the frontier settlement of Tati while their white escort went out for a drink. The commander of the garrison, Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton Gould-Adams, uncertain of who these men were, attempted to arrest them. A scuffle turned into a shootout, and the two indunas were killed. It is not difficult to imagine what Lobengula's likely interpretation of these events would have been when word reached him.

Nonetheless, Sir Henry Loch found himself in a challenging position. He was not quite as in awe of Rhodes as Hercules Robinson had once been, and he entertained a preference for official rather than private jurisdiction over British imperial territory. However, amaNdebele law and justice were clearly incompatible with British, and however much he disliked Rhodes, it was clear that the rule of Lobengula had to be brought to an end. Naturally ambivalent towards the Charter, he was keen to see Her Majesty's forces assume control of Matabeleland. Intelligence emerging from Bulawayo was also mixed. The Reverend Charles Helm maintained that the amaNdebele were not united on a course of war. On the other hand, British South Africa Company Resident in Bulawayo, Johann Colenbrander, assured the office of the High Commissioner that the amaNdebele were indeed universally committed to war.

Upon this, Sir Henry erred on the side of caution and mobilised the Bechuanaland Border Police under the same Colonel Hamilton Gould-Adams, who was authorised to proceed towards Bulawayo and take

command of the situation as quickly as possible. What was at stake in this situation was Company or Imperial rule. The amaNdebele were to be sacrificed one way or another, but the question now was who would be next.

As Colonel Hamilton Gould-Adams quickly assembled a flying column, Jameson and his 200 volunteers spurred their horses and set off at a gallop from Fort Victoria, heading for the amaNdebele capital. Jameson at all costs had to beat Gould-Adams to the prize, for if agents of the Crown were seen to have occupied the capital, Company control of Matabeleland would be lost, shares would collapse, and that would probably be the end of it for everyone.

Thus commenced the First Matabele War, which in the end was brief, bloody and one-sided. The amaNdebele manifestly failed to make use of their natural advantages, for where they could so easily have formed their superior numbers into highly mobile, flexible and harassing guerrilla units, they instead chose classic battle formations that were vulnerable to orchestrated gunfire. In two significant battles – the Battle of Bembezi and the Battle of Shangani – impis several thousand strong were driven in waves against volleys of musketry and machine-gun fire until losses became patently unsustainable.

The campaign ended on 4 November 1893, with Jameson and his volunteers riding into the smoking ruins of Bulawayo. Lobengula fled north, leaving his capital in ruins and the remnants of his army scattered. Gould-Adams arrived a day or two later, too late to impose Crown authority. The British South Africa Company now owned Matabeleland. The long road had finally come to an end, and the amaNdebele nation was no more. Cable traffic between Bulawayo, Cape Town and London was for a few days frenetic as the news spread far and wide. Company shareholders celebrated, of course, and Rhodes was jubilant. Jameson, however, was more sober and reflective, for it was a melancholy sight to see the great enclosure burned to the ground, and the primitive grandeur of it all reduced to ashes. Lobengula was nowhere to found, and at best a handful of his people remained behind.

It is also true that Jameson was stunned by the speed and success of his first military adventure. From the easy-going family doctor, the parlour raconteur and club man, who for so long resisted Rhodes' overtures, he was now an imperial buccaneer, at the cutting edge of British expansion,

commanding armies, defeating despots and governing colonies. It was stirring stuff, and he wondered yet again how much more he could achieve.

For the time being, however, there remained the question of Lobengula. Jameson was, of course, disappointed not to find him waiting in Bulawayo to formalise his surrender, and then submit to exile in Madeira, Seychelles or some such place. It could not truly be said that the war was over while the King was still at large, and certainly he remained a point around which the defeated army could reform. Lobengula had to be captured and brought in, and it had to be a British South Africa Company operation.

16
The Shangani Patrol

Assuredly they did not perish in vain – **Edgar Sanderson**

When news of the defeat of his army reached him, Lobengula too was stunned at the speed of events, now that the dam wall had ruptured. During the fighting, he was not in Bulawayo at all, but a few miles north at the smaller kraal of Umvutcha, and it was there that news of the defeat reached him. Had the killing of his two Indunas at Tati not been so much on his mind, there is every chance that he would have attempted negotiation, but he was now convinced that his fate would be the same if he accepted surrender. Instead, he ordered the destruction of Bulawayo, after which he fled north in a convoy of four ox wagons, accompanied by a small entourage of counsellors, wives and family members. Wasting no time, the party set off northwards towards the lands of the Gwaai and lower Shangani rivers. Around them, spread over a wide area, marched the surviving regiments of the army, no single unit of which had yet given any indication of surrender. Despite being sick, demoralised and very probably dying, Lobengula remained the focus of the nation.

This presented Jameson with something of a conundrum. The taking of Bulawayo was certainly satisfying, but without a formal surrender, and with Lobengula still at large, the amaNdebele could not be regarded as defeated. However, for the settler militias to pursue the war any further than the capture of Bulawayo would have required a campaign on more strictly military lines than hitherto. Jameson, of course, was commander-in-chief at that point, but he was no military man, although his sense of self-belief by then was unassailable. He regarded the capture of Lobengula as essential, but he also did not imagine that it would be particularly difficult to achieve. In this regard, he was surrounded by a motley collection of adventurers who were equally brash and similarly inclined to believe that Lobengula's capture would be a mere formality.

Among these was Major Allan Wilson, commander of the Victoria contingent of the Mashonaland Volunteers. Like Jameson, Wilson was no orthodox soldier, and nor a commissioned officer, so the rank of 'Major' in his case was rather arbitrary. His interest in the expedition reflected that of most of the irregulars, who were in it strictly for the plunder and the glory.

Wilson, an affable thirty-seven-year-old Scotsman, was by then a fifteen year veteran of southern Africa, having served previously in the Cape Mounted Rifles, and seeing action in both the Anglo-Zulu and the First Boer Wars. He was tall, powerfully built and of enormous daring and ability, and generally regarded as an amiable and easy-going character. This made him reasonably typical of his command, and typical of most, if not all of the other irregulars. He was also a popular commander, both trusted and respected by his men.

As a military man, his fellow Major could hardly have been more different. Patrick Forbes, of whom we have heard already, was a thickset, pedestrian and humourless man, conspicuously loyal to the old spit-and-polish army tradition. His recent appointment to the position of Resident Magistrate for the district of Fort Salisbury took him out of the field, but he was still widely respected for his actions in Manicaland. Upon the outbreak of the war, he was placed in command of the Salisbury Volunteers, and at age thirty-two, was the youngest of Jameson's senior officers. Most importantly, however, he was the only one with any conventional military training. This he received primarily from the Sandhurst Military Academy, which gave him a respectable pedigree, after which he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant in the Inniskilling Dragoons. It goes without saying that as a product of the British Army, he would have found serving under a civilian quite a novelty, but life in the colonies was brimming with originality, and the whole enterprise was nothing if not unorthodox.

The most enigmatic of all the men attending Jameson's strategy meeting that day was Pieter Raaff, who more than anyone typified the irregular colonial commando rider. By profession, he was a butcher and magistrate who signed up for the expedition for the same reason as everyone else. At aged forty-four, however, he added a considerable weight of experience to the expedition, having scouted for the British at various times, and seen action in a number of the great battles of the Anglo-Zulu War. In stature he was short, standing only five foot four inches, but, like Jameson, for this, he compensated with a tremendous ego. He was pampered in appearance, something of a dandy, but this was deceptive. In the business of native warfare, Raaff was, without a doubt, the most competent detachment commander present in Bulawayo on that day.

Perhaps the most dangerously underrated commander of the entire field, however, was not in Bulawayo at all, but hurrying north with the

dislocated remains of the amaNdebele army. His name was Mjaan or Mtjane, and his immediate objective was to support and protect his commander-in-chief's retreat. Mjaan was a man in his early fifties with a lifetime of military experience behind him. Not least of his battles were the two recent engagements of Shangani and Bembezi, where he and his Mbizo Regiment faced the settler militia and were the pride of the amaNdebele army was decimated by a combination of trained musketry and machinegun fire. From this, he learned that if such tactics were reencountered, he would need to quickly re-evaluate the established procedures of his men and commanders. Otherwise, their ultimate defeat would be absolute.

Jameson's first action, in the meanwhile, was to send a messenger to Lobengula with a letter inviting him to return. "I send this message," he wrote, "in order, if possible, to prevent the necessity of any further killing of your people or burning of their kraals. To stop this useless slaughter, you must at once come and see me at Bulawayo when I will guarantee that your life will be saved and that you will be kindly treated. Should you not arrive I will at once send out troops to follow you, as I am determined as soon as possible to put the country in a condition where whites and blacks can live in peace and friendliness."

Four days later, a rambling and equivocal reply was returned, offering no definite promise of surrender and was probably intended only to buy more time. On 14 November, therefore, Jameson dispatched a robust mounted force with orders to scatter the remaining amaNdebele, but more importantly, to either capture Lobengula or report his death. After some consideration, and consultation with Rhodes, Jameson placed Major Patrick Forbes in command of the expedition.

No one could have been more surprised at this appointment than Pieter Raaff. Allan Wilson too was somewhat taken aback, for although he might have been prepared to concede that Raaff probably outranked him, he definitely saw no reason to serve under Forbes. He and Raaff were soon in conversation about the matter, and as irregulars, they were not duty-bound to keep their opinions from their respective commands. Soon enough, therefore, the rank and file of the flying column joined in the conversation, and before long, Forbes was universally despised by everyone. It is probable that even the Salisbury Volunteers would rather that Forbes serve in support of a man more experienced than he.

Initially, as one accustomed to accepting orders with a minimum of reflection, Forbes was oblivious to the controversy. His command, with the exception of a small detachment of Bechuanaland Border Police, were irregulars, to be led and not driven, and they certainly could not be treated as one might a detachment of British Tommies. As brilliant as his little adventure in Manicaland was, he still had little if any experience of commanding volunteers, and with typical army tunnel-vision, he gave the matter no thought at all. Johann Colenbrander, another extraordinarily able and versatile company man, attached himself to the column as interpreter, as did the flamboyant American, Major Frederick Russell Burnham, and his brother-in-law and compatriot Peter Ingram, both as scouts.

The first thrust out of Bulawayo proved to be unpromising. Forbes felt that a vigorous push north along the Bubi River would catch Lobengula off guard, and bring matters to a speedy conclusion. However, he soon found himself mired in difficulties, the first of which was the sudden breaking of the annual monsoon, that immediately turned the countryside into a slough. The second was the foot-dragging discontent of men hauled away on an uncomfortable mission when most had assumed that the war was over. Forbes responded to this malingering in his customary manner, driving his troops on despite clear resistance, and generally plunging morale.

Soon complaints among his officers became so persistent that to silence them he ordered a general parade, and invited all those who were dissatisfied to take one step forward. All but six men did. Utterly flummoxed, Forbes simply forced the unhappy column on, and on it struggled, until Raaff was at last able to persuade him to pause, and reconsider. Numbers of amaNdebele fighters were beginning to appear among the general movement of refugees, most claiming that they were on their way south to surrender. Raaff, however, sensed differently, believing that a hostile mobilisation was underway. The situation could potentially be perilous if enough of them got together to form a battalion. This was sound advice, which Forbes initially tried to ignore, but Raaff was not a man to reserve his opinion. Eventually, the two had a furious row, in full view of the rank and file, and in a contest of personalities, Forbes was easily defeated.

Most of the men took Raaff’s side, which again wholly broadsided Forbes. He had no concept of factionalism in the ranks, and for the first

time in his career, he had no choice but to defer to the opinion of a subordinate. Nonetheless, his surrender was not absolute, and he refused to consider turning back, undertaking only to withdraw if things became too complicated. Raaff patiently explained to him that if things became too complicated, the column would probably no longer have the option of withdrawal. Forbes, however, stood in command, and thus the column crept forward through the mud, and under a constant pall of rain.

To all of this, Allan Wilson listened carefully but kept his opinions to himself. He was alert to opportunity and unprepared for the time being to take sides. Captain Hamilton Lendy, on the other hand, a member of the British South Africa Company Police, and man better accustomed to discipline, just could not hold his tongue. The ferocity of his criticism of Forbes is highly suggestive of some pre-existing bad blood between them, but the effect of it was no less damaging, undermining discipline, and by that, the practical fighting ability of an already divided force. Forbes was eventually forced to concede that the column had been too lightly provisioned to penetrate far, and he ordered it to fall back on the Shiloh Mission at Inyati.

Conditions, however, as the rain set in, continued to deteriorate. At Shiloh, while the column stood down temporarily, the bickering continued. Raaff protested to Forbes that the military situation had become untenable, adding for the benefit of a fertile audience that the column was in real danger of annihilation. To many of the Salisbury men, this was all that they needed to hear. Announcing that since they were volunteers, they could not be forced to go anywhere, and so they intended to return. Another vote was held, and this time Forbes was not particularly surprised to find only seventeen of the ninety men of his own Salisbury Column prepared to follow him. Of Raaff's Rangers, only four elected to go on, while of the Victoria men all voted to continue. The small Bechuanaland Police contingent, being the only regular imperial troops assigned, was not consulted.

In the meanwhile, fresh supplies arrived from Bulawayo, along with orders from Jameson to reorganise and re-deploy. The majority of the Salisbury Volunteers turned back, leaving Major Wilson's Victoria men as the only complete unit. They were, however, loyal in the first instance to Wilson, leaving Forbes effectively without a command. Despite this, the more pressure he found himself under, the more trenchant Forbes became.

More than anything, it was this lack of adaptability that so fatally undermined his leadership, and placed the remainder of the column under such magnified risk.

Forbes drew supplies of three quarter food rations per man for twelve days, and on 25 November 1893 set off with his remaining 290-men. A little later, when hauling wagons in wet conditions proved futile, another group returned with the transports, leaving only 160 mounted men and two Maxim Guns. Of course, it is easy with the benefit of hindsight to judge the quality of decisions made in the field, but this certainly was the moment to abandon the march. Notwithstanding conditions, it was becoming manifestly evident that a mobilisation was taking place, and a large body of men was clearly shadowing the column as it struck deeper into Matabeleland. Persistent rain and ever-present mist diminished visibility, and frayed nerves already stretched to the limit.

One day the two scouts Burnham and Ingram returned with news confirming a large detachment of armed amaNdebele moving parallel to the column. Those that they encountered gave the impression of being demoralised, maintaining that they were heading south to Bulawayo to surrender. Villagers questioned all seemed to point to just over the horizon, claiming that Lobengula was only a short way ahead. He never was, of course, and the rumour spread that the column was being drawn into a trap.

From Shiloh Mission the column struck directly north, crossing the Bubi River on 1 December. It was later revealed in the gathering of oral history, many years later, that at this point it came to within a stone's throw of Lobengula’s retreating entourage. Burnham and Ingram, foraging a mile or so ahead of the column, entered a village where Lobengula was taking shelter, although they did not recognise him. Lobengula, however, panicked and returned an induna back in the general direction of the column with two bags containing 1,000 gold sovereigns, and a note that read: “White men, I am conquered. Take this and go back.”

However, the induna, nervous of approaching the leading edge of the column, came up from the rear and handed the bag and the note to two troopers. The pair then destroyed the letter, kept the gold and mentioned the incident to no one. Neither Forbes nor any of his officers were aware that this had taken place. Had that information reached them, Lobengula might easily have been persuaded to surrender, which in turn would have meant a guarantee of a safe return for all. In the event, the column arrived on the

banks of the Shangani River, with Lobengula once again in retreat, and again reportedly no more than a days march ahead.

By this time, Mjaan was gathering together as many of his fighting men as he could and closely monitoring the progress of the flying column. Using Lobengula as a decoy, he hoped to lure the column across the Shangani River, where it could be cut off from any possible retreat and relatively easily overwhelmed. To this end, he stationed the King's wagons in clear sight of the south bank, while a herd boy was primed with false intelligence and positioned where he could be easily detained by roving scouts. At about three o'clock on the afternoon of 3 December, the column reached the banks of the Shangani, where it paused to regroup. At that point, the river was flowing briskly, but it was not yet in spate. The young cattle herder was detained and delivered to Raaff who extracted the information before handing him over to Colenbrander, who confirmed it. Both men, however, were sceptical. Forbes, on the other hand, desperate now for a conclusion, was inclined to believe the story, and to verify it, he crossed the river with a small escort and rode towards a collection of huts. There he found fresh evidence of occupation, returning to the column an hour or so later in a high state of excitement. As he alighted from his horse, he called a meeting of his two senior officers.

Forbes outlined the situation. By his estimation, the column was now in very close proximity to Lobengula. He intended, therefore, to consolidate defences on the banks of the river and be in a position to mount an attack the following morning. Furthermore, he planned to leave both Wilson and Raaff in command of the column while he took a small force to receive Lobengula into custody. Needless to say, both Raaff and Wilson were appalled at this news. Quite clearly, Forbes was trying to exclude them both from the finish.

At that moment, Forbes, in full, excited torrent, was interrupted as Raaff gruffly reminded him that he had been the first to interrogate the boy, so he knew exactly what the position was. Upon that, he spun on his heels and stalked off. Forbes watched him leave, and for a moment stood speechless. In that moment, however, Wilson was thinking fast, and by the time Forbes regained his composure, he was ready to offer an alternative plan. He proposed that while sufficient daylight remained, he would mount a brief reconnaissance across the river, and with a small detachment of men, attempt to establish the exact whereabouts of Lobengula's camp. If it were

possible to capture the King that night, he would do so, although his principal objective would be reconnaissance.

Against what might seem in retrospect sound logic, Forbes agreed to this, but only under certain conditions. If Wilson captured Lobengula, he was to bring him back on horseback, failing which he should keep him under observation until the main column came up. Then, somewhat in contradiction, he ordered that the patrol return to the column by nightfall. Such ambiguity, of course, was manna to Wilson, and license for him to do precisely as he pleased. Wasting no time, and before Forbes could change his mind, he selected the twelve best-mounted men of his Victoria contingent and made ready to leave. Several officers who were friends of his sought permission from Forbes to accompany the patrol, to which Forbes consented, adding to the group the two American scouts Burnham and Ingram. Thus, nineteen mounted men formed up and set off towards the river. As he watched the riders fade into the twilight, Raaff was heard to mutter that not one of the damned fools would return alive.

The strategy for Lobengula's capture now rode on the simple testimony of a herd boy, Forbes' wishful observations and the tempers of a trio of feuding egos. Lobengula had, of course, already been moved on to a safer location, and a simple trap laid. Raaff might have suspected this, but when it counted his lips were sealed. Colenbrander was certainly puzzled, but by nothing that he could put his finger on. As a defensive camp was struck that evening, a mood of expectation mingled with dread. Men separated into groups, fires were lit and conversations muted, and no one strayed that night very far from his weapons.

Mjaan, of course, was disappointed. He had not anticipated the column splitting up as it did, with just a small patrol venturing across the river. As he observed these events, however, he ordered his men not to interfere with the patrol, and it was for this reason that Wilson crossed the river without engagement, and without seeing any visible signs of military force. The patrol then rode on for a mile or so in high spirits. The time was a minute or two past five o'clock, and on a summer evening, another hour and a half of useful daylight might be expected, which ought to have allowed plenty of time to intercept Lobengula if the patrol managed to locate him reasonably quickly. Each man felt, for a while at least, relieved to be free of the oppressive atmosphere of the column, and convinced as

they were that they were hot on the trail of Lobengula, they anticipated that the laurels for his capture would soon be theirs.

Back in camp, Forbes too was indulging in a moment of comfortable certainty. Content that Wilson would locate the King, he was also satisfied that he would be unable to bring him in alone. Forbes himself would do that in the morning, and the credit for it would be his. Wilson, in the meanwhile, led his men a few miles upstream before moving in under cover of woodland. Their guide was a young amaNdebele who led them further from the column than Wilson would have preferred. Soon enough, the patrol found itself hampered by dwindling daylight, with an uncertain distance yet to cover, and separated from the main column by several miles. They were also coming into increasing contact with armed amaNdebele who appeared hostile when approached for directions.

As daylight faded, Wilson began to mull over a fateful strategy. It was becoming clear to him that the patrol would not find or capture Lobengula that evening, but at the same time, he was reluctant to give up the advantage that an extra few miles of reconnaissance gave him. The first stars were peering through gaps in the cloud, while in the distance a murmur of thunder promised rain. Under the last light of day, the sails of Lobengula's wagons suddenly came into view, and that was all that Wilson needed to confirm his strategy. He elected to retire to higher ground, and under cover of dense woodland, make camp for the night.

At that point, Wilson had no means of knowing that back in camp, Forbes had made a grim discovery. Soon after the patrol rode out of camp, he and Colenbrander questioned the herd boy once again, and this time they succeeded in extracting the truth. Now, to his horror, Forbes realised that the mobilisation of several thousand amaNdebele warriors was underway all around them, meaning that the Shangani Patrol was now in desperate peril.

His initial response was to sit on the information and do nothing. As he recalled, he had been quite specific in his instructions that the patrol should return by nightfall. For the time being then, he felt it unnecessary to send any warning or reinforcements. However, as he anxiously paced the ground inside the camp, pictures of disaster, recrimination and a ruined career began to pass before his eyes. Minutes turned into hours, and as he peered periodically from the perimeter, nothing seemed to disturb the gathering darkness other than distant flashes of lightning. He tried to

console himself with the thought that the herd boy might have been wrong, and that if he rode out promptly the next morning with his own force, then Wilson's advantage would serve him too. In the pit of his stomach, however, he knew that the whole edifice, held together by sheer force of character, was about to crumble. There was no doubt in his mind that Wilson intended to lead his patrol on a solo dash in the face of all rational strategy, and contrary to a direct order. He also sensed that an attack on the main column was probably imminent. There was no other way to look at it, the situation was desperate.

On the far side of the river, in the meanwhile, and deep in the silent bushveld, Wilson was not without gathering concerns of his own. Overhead the cloud was closing in, and an evening drizzle soon settled into a steady downpour. They could hear the waters of the Shangani River beginning to rage, but above that, and the constant clamour of the rain, they could also hear another sound, a soft murmur, a combination of half-heard footfalls and the whispered conversation of many voices. Although morale remained high, confidence waned as the lonely night closed in. After a brief consultation with his men, Wilson elected to send Captain William Napier and two troopers back to brief Forbes. He made no specific request for support, however, perhaps assuming that Forbes would immediately arrange assistance, or maybe because he did not really want any help.

At around o'clock that night, Napier and his party arrived back in camp to report the news. Forbes' worst fears were realised. Napier added upon his own initiative that Wilson expected Forbes to mobilise the main column and proceed in support at once. He pointed out, however, that the river was now so high that moving the whole column across that night would be very difficult, although perhaps not quite yet impossible. At this point, there was nothing Forbes could have done that would have altered the course of events, and certainly, nothing that would not have been seized upon and used against him by his junior officers. He was dismayed by Wilson's independence of mind, and for the first time at an absolute loss. Nothing in his background equipped him for either mobile planning or the vagaries of undisciplined subordinates. He consoled himself with the fleeting hope that the patrol might not be in such tremendous peril after all. Napier and the two troopers had, after all, come through unscathed. For a moment he even allowed himself to contemplate an immediate

mobilisation, but about this at least his instincts were sound. The mere possibility of a general massacre froze the idea out of his mind.

Mjaan, in the meanwhile, had been carefully observing movements in and around the camp, and was by then was aware that the patrol was separated from the column, although he continued to allow movement between the two groups to continue, hoping that he could draw the main force to move. Forbes, however, had no intention of taking the column across the river, but after several hours of indecision he was eventually persuaded to send Captain Henry Borrow with twenty mounted men to reinforce Wilson. Just before dawn, the party slipped quietly out of camp and headed through the darkness towards their stranded comrades. Wilson was horrified when he peered into the dawn light and saw only these few emerging. For most of the night, the patrol had heard and sensed the movement of amaNdebele fighters all around them, and they knew what they were in for. The thrill of the chase had by then become fear for their own lives, and most had hoped at least to see a Maxim, if not the entire column riding to their support.

Wilson then sought the advice of his men. All were pessimistic and pleaded with him to order a retreat, failing which none of them gave much for their chances. Wilson disagreed, vetoing the majority and urging them to move against Lobengula immediately. It says much for Wilson's personal authority and the respect he commanded that even under those dismal circumstances all his men agreed. It may still have been possible for them to get back to the column if they moved quickly, but from the moment they mounted their horses and cantered off in the direction of Lobengula's camp, they were doomed.

A little later, the patrol arrived at the place where they had seen Lobengula's wagons the previous evening. There they were confronted by a body of amaNdebele fighters, emerging out of the dripping dawn and calling across that they all would be dead before the day was over. The first attack began with a volley of misdirected fire from the direction of the wagons, and from tree cover a short distance beyond. One horse was killed, and a trooper wounded as the patrol fought a brief rear-guard action, before falling back and forming a defensive circle around a termite mound. The first rushed attack was beaten back reasonably easily, after which the amaNdebele retreated to a safe distance and observed.

It was only at this stage that the penny seemed to drop, and Wilson began to consider a retreat under fire. Forming a square, the patrol managed to cover a short distance before it became apparent that they would not escape unless they mounted an aggressive charge. This would mean leaving those on foot as well as the wounded to the mercy of the amaNdebele, and as Ingram later observed, these were not men given to abandoning their friends. Instead, it was decided that they would form another defensive circle, dig in, and then send Burnham and Ingram, who had the best chance of getting through, to the column to urge Forbes to send more reinforcements.

The two mounted up and spurred their horses through a forming body of amaNdebele warriors. By the time they reached the column, firing could already be heard from the direction of the patrol. The pair then struggled across the swollen river, finding when they arrived the column engaged in a stiff action against a large force of amaNdebele. It was evident at that point that the patrol had no chance of survival. The column fended off the worst of the attack, but there was no possibility that Forbes could consider relieving the patrol.

Mjaan rightly concluded that the column, with its riflemen and machine guns, was invulnerable, and he began, therefore, to redirect his troops across the river, throwing more into the assault against the patrol. Since no white man survived that action, accounts of it are vague and are primarily coloured by the oral testimony of surviving amaNdebele fighters.

Whatever may have transpired during those last hours, it is certain that an uncommon meeting of minds took place between the two sides. The amaNdebele were a brutal and often crude society. Warfare defined their cultural identity, and killing was their supreme expression. Terrible cruelty born of contempt was usually inflicted on inferior persons, but men of calibre, those who fought with courage, heard in death the sincere accolades of their enemy. Men, both white and black, met for a moment in time in an engagement more intimate than any other known to man. It was a rare instance when each side understood the other and met on a plane of equality. Never again in the history of Rhodesia would the black race achieve anything close to a victory of this magnitude over whites. It was the first and the last, and as such, it lives in the memory of the amaNdebele as the most magnificent of all their glories.

Legend portrays the event in all its awful magnificence. Initially, the usual practice of throwing waves of men armed with assegais into withering rifle fire was employed, but as the morning wore on, and amaNdebele losses mounted, the warriors retreated into the dense woodland and were content to wear down the doomed patrol by insistent and overwhelming sniper fire. Mjaan was interviewed sometime later, and his account paint a vivid picture of the final moments:

"Shouted demands for surrender met with defiant refusal. I would have spared their lives, for they were brave men. Then from the ranks of the doomed came the suggestion that one should live to tell the tale. Amandebele agreed. But I think they could find no-one willing to leave his brothers lest he was accounted a coward among women in after years. At sunset, Inyamazane, we made an end of it. It was quick. They were finished. There was great rejoicing in our camp that night, for many assegais were wet with the blood of the white man and meat was eaten and beer drunk. Having assegaied the wounded, who were too weak to fight…they do not die like Mashona. They never cry or groan. They are men. No! I will never fight whites again. They are not afraid to die: They are men."

The Last Stand of the Shangani Patrol

17
Days of Plunder: The Jameson era

The northern pirates are now in possession of the great King's Kraal, and the calf of the black cow has fled into the wilderness – **Frederick Courtney Selous**

The Shangani Patrol episode was the last significant action of the First Matabele War. Although no definitive information has ever emerged, it was widely accepted that Lobengula died shortly after that from a broken heart and a plethora of physical ailments. Probably these included stomach cancer, which more than likely killed him, although it is also possible that he took poison. Soon afterwards Matabeleland was officially occupied, and behind that, the first efforts at formal native administration began. By necessity, these efforts would be experimental and would reflect more than anything a phase of government characterised by Jameson's own erratic and rather unprofessional standards.

Rhodes' high-handed approach to the creation of Rhodesia was reflected in the subsequent attitudes of both the administration and settlers. The European minority revealed its utter estrangement from the native by the blanket assumption that the amaNdebele were not only beaten but accepted defeat. This was manifestly not the case. The amaNdebele had undoubtedly tasted defeat, but they did not regard the death of their king and the loss of their capital as the end of the war. Indeed, the undercurrents of resistance were very much alive, and the same was mostly true for the maShona. The superficial acceptance of white occupation, which was all that was visible, was dangerously deceptive. The thoughtless, indifferent, and at times cruel manner in which the white man marched into the future merely insulated embers of resentment that glowed both hot and deep in the belly of the black nation.

Matabeleland, in the meanwhile, did not enjoy civilian administration in any conventional sense until the end of 1894. It was then that Rhodes replaced the rule of the police, a force composed entirely of whites, and what is more, of young, disinterested and mostly ignorant whites, with Native Commissioners. These were men of a somewhat higher calibre whose work explicitly centred on the issue of blacks, and their rights and protections. In fact, in most cases, they merely inherited pre-existing

policies of mass land seizure and wholesale cattle appropriation. Many observers of the period lamented the poor standards of general administration in Matabeleland, and in particular in the field of native administration.

At the end of the war, Jameson found himself with a great deal of power concentrated in his hands. The war had been won with little imperial involvement, which meant that moral sway over the new country lay with Rhodes and him almost exclusively. Jameson was also faced with the fact that after the seizure of Matabeleland, Rhodes was obliged to recognise those who had contributed money and support. The spoils amounted to the land and resources of an entire country, and these were Rhodes' and Jameson's to give away more or less as they chose. Rhodes had relied on quite some prominent people to expedite the process to date, not just regarding his occupation of Rhodesia, but in the usual ways and means of capital and political cronyism. It was now incumbent on him to show generosity. Lavish recognition by way of naming streets, squares, parks, schools and public buildings after peers and capitalists was not enough. Hard assets like land, livestock and mining rights were also expected.

By then Rhodes was at the very pinnacle of his career. At forty years of age, he was not only Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, but he controlled a vast and diverse financial empire, and for all intents and purposes, he owned a colony. Unlike most of the Victorian *nouveau riche*, he now enjoyed, if not the embrace of kinship, then at least some fellowship and a great deal of respect from the ruling classes. As a consequence, he felt empowered and munificent as never before. According to Sir William Milton, one of Jameson's later successors, the 'honourable and military' elements appeared to be everywhere. Before any checks and balances could be observed, Jameson was able to distribute enormous quantities of amaNdebele land and cattle to mostly speculative, absent or unproductive recipients. The solution with regard to the natives was simply to resettle them in reserves, where few willingly went, preferring to remain as squatters on land now owned, often in absentia, by a white man.

Of course, it would be misleading to write off all whites now occupying Matabeleland as villainous and racist, because this was not so. We will deal with the Matabele and Mashona Rebellions in a later chapter, but there were enough whites given advance warning by their servants and labourers when this episode erupted to suggest that they were on good

terms. Missionaries were also in general highly regarded, as was the occasional hunter, Frederick Selous for example. However, the majority tended to justify in one way or another the stereotype, as, indeed, did most of the blacks. Whites tended to view their new neighbours as primitive and indolent, and on the surface, they certainly presented that picture.

Jameson, in the meanwhile, struck at the very fulcrum of amaNdebele values when he began the mass expropriation of cattle, as the booty of war. This was a rash ill thought out policy. The amaNdebele certainly understood the rules of conquest, loot and plunder. It was, after all, the foundation of their economy, but Jameson went much further than this. It is to the credit of a handful of men, Sir Henry Loch among them, that any voices were raised in protest at all, but it is to no one's credit that nothing was done about it.

The amaNdebele inherited from their Nguni parents a love of cattle, and a social economy at the core of which lay their herds. Jameson began by claiming the 'royal herd' as a right of conquest, which was a clever, but rather cynical move. He based this on the assumption that all things can be accounted for by individual ownership. He, however, knew well that the monarch held the national herd in trust, as a national treasury, and dispersed them to individuals only by dint of loan, favour or convenience. This made available to plunder upwards of 200,000 head of cattle, ostensibly owned by Lobengula. Before any effective control or limitation could be put in place to limit this, the amaNdebele herd was reduced to 41,000 head. Most of the remaining 160,000 were claimed as 'booty on the run', or simply seized and redistributed without oversight or control.

Then, at precisely this time, a plague of the cattle disease rinderpest arrived in southern Africa, having swept south from Somalia in the decades prior. The rinderpest ravaged local herds, both wild and domestic, and it was a bitter harvest for the amaNdebele to have the white man enter their reserves and slaughter most of their remaining cattle. Of course, they had no idea of the reason and took this action as merely vindictive, and a preliminary, indeed, to genocide.

Then came 'hut taxes'. All over colonial Africa, blacks were being pressured off the land by the imposition of taxes. The idea was simply to force them into employment to pay taxes, which would have the dual effect of creating a consumer tendency, and therefore a labour force. In amaNdebele culture, however, work was a woman's business. Men made

war and women worked. One can argue that it was a necessary bridge from old to new, and perhaps it was, but it certainly did not please the amaNdebele. It might also be observed that the maShona adapted to labour and economics far more efficiently, and were quick to take up the opportunities of education offered by the missionaries.

Another ill-advised move was to establish a native constabulary. It was generally felt that a force of police drawn from the amaNdebele would be sympathetic to the amaNdebele, but this was not so. In fact, amaNdebele society remained defined very much by caste, and by the 1890s, the original Nguni and Basotho bloodlines were so diminished that most of the rank and file were amaHoli, and it was these that found their way into the ranks of the Matabeleland Native Police. Native Commissioners were fond of proclaiming that their black constables all once fought with the legendary Mbizo Regiment, and no constable ever denied it. However, old orders were reversed, and old grievances revisited, and the Matabeleland Native Police very quickly became yet another source of grinding injury.

In the meanwhile, settlement went ahead in both Mashonaland and Matabeleland with minimal regard to the potential risks of an uprising. Lobengula's two most likely heirs were removed from the country by Rhodes and brought to Cape Town where they were maintained in style not unbecoming of European royalty. They were enrolled in school and introduced to a life from which they would unlikely be willing to return. This they owed this to Rhodes, and that debt remained on the books. In fact, Njube and Nguboyenja Khumalo, who were eligible for succession thanks to their birth while Lobengula was king, would never return to Rhodesia, and both would die relatively young. Very little information is available to add any substance to their lives, however, but if their removal was intended to create confusion over the question of succession, then this policy succeeded.

The question of succession remained unanswered in the aftermath of the occupation, and indeed it was never resolved. After the death of Lobengula, no amaNdebele king has ever sat on the throne. Leadership devolved into a loose system of committees, as various senior indunas tended to retain the loyalty of their regimental households and family groups. The only central and potentially unifying influence was religious. Readers might recall that Mzilikazi assimilated advanced maShona spiritual practice with minimal modification, as perhaps a political gesture to balance

out some of the more aggressive amaNdebele policy. The same essential theocracy that thrived during the era of the Mwene Mutapa gained considerable stature and authority under the protection of the amaNdebele kings. The supreme spiritual leader was the ‘Mlimo’, sometimes also a name used to describe the ‘Supreme Being’, similar to the use of the term ‘Mwari’, but generally, an individual identified as a high priest or spirit medium at the head of a cult.

18
The ‘Raiders’

The veterinary surgeon has left for Johannesburg with some good horseflesh and backs himself for seven hundred – **Frederick Rutherfoord Harris**

Sometime in 1886, the South African Gold Rush began. The build-up to it was, in fact, rather slow, since the richest deposits were deeply buried, and so exploitation tended to favour capital rather than labour. By then, thanks to diamonds, South Africa was already the preferred destination of British investment capital, and it did not take long, therefore, for the gold industry in South Africa to be established on the basis of deep mines, migrant labour and multiple allied sectors. The centre of the gold industry was the Witwatersrand, and the capital of Witwatersrand was the cash-heavy, gold rush city of Johannesburg.

Cecil Rhodes was involved on the Transvaal goldfields through Goldfields of South Africa Limited, formed in 1887 as a holding company for various claims and properties acquired on the Witwatersrand. In this particular capital bonanza, however, he did not succeed quite so spectacularly as on the diamond fields, but by then it hardly mattered, for he was already wealthy, and his interest was now almost entirely political. By then he was in his prime, approaching the end of his first term as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and worth several million pounds. He was also, however, declining. Every day he grew heavier, his complexion more purple and his breath laboured. Several minor heart attacks left him anxious, and fearful as the hours of his life ran through his fingers. While remaining passionately committed to the fundamentals of his imperial agenda, but there was no doubt that he was in decline.

In 1894, as the dust settled in Matabeleland, Rhodes was perhaps best known for tabling and piloting through Parliament the Glen Grey Act. One of the first overtly segregationist articles of legislation to yet pass through the Cape assembly, this sought to limit the influence of blacks on the common voter’s roll, also imposing a poll tax intended to press tribal blacks into the mainstream labour economy. This, however, although probably his most high-profile political action at that time, was not his primary interest. He was working far more diligently behind the scenes to

unite the two white races of South Africa in a single territorial union, to the ultimate purpose of an amalgamated South Africa.

By 1894, he was on the cusp of achieving this. From the moment he entered parliament, his objective had been to bring together the two sides of the floor – Dutch and British. The Cape Dutch, those that did not respond to the call to trek in the 1830s, were, in general, better educated and more sophisticated than their Republican cousins, and Rhodes felt that if the idea of a unified South Africa could be sold to them, they, in turn, would pave the way for the republics to come on board. His premiership of the Cape relied on a political pact between the Afrikaner Bond and Rhodes' own Progressive Party, an achievement that confirmed to many who would never have believed it that Rhodes possessed not only his signature bull-headed determination but also a rare degree of diplomatic finesse.

Things, however, began to unravel almost at the moment that Jameson marched into Bulawayo. The effect of this was empowering for both men. Each in their own way had achieved so much that it now began to seem that there was nothing that they could not achieve. At some point, thanks to a combination of mortality and hubris, Rhodes began to consider a short-cut to South African union. At about this time, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, was approached by Rhodes' representatives in London, requesting the right of the British South Africa Company to assume administrative control of Bechuanaland. This was rather an extravagant request, and it was turned down. The activities of the Company in Matabeleland and Mashonaland did not exemplify the unwritten charter of the British Empire, and there was no reason at all why Rhodes should be allowed to get his hands on Bechuanaland. Failing that, the same representatives began probing the possibility of some sort of territorial concession at the border of Bechuanaland and the Transvaal, for a purpose that they were unwilling to disclose.

Chamberlain, of course, was intrigued and instructed his staff to investigate. It did not take long after that for rumours to surface that Rhodes was planning some sort of a *coup d'état* in the Transvaal, and with typical indifference to discretion, he seemed to be making no particular secret of the fact. The basis of the coup was to be a staged uprising of 'Uitlanders', the foreign contingent in the Transvaal who were mostly associated with the mines. There were roughly twice as many English speaking loyalists in the Transvaal as there were Boer republicans, and based on the grievance of

taxation without representation, there could indeed be found grounds for an uprising in such was required.

By the time Chamberlain got wind of all of this, Rhodes' organisation in South Africa was already mobilised, and as arms were being smuggled into Johannesburg, various reform committees were established to ferment agitation and amplify any grievances. Rhodes, in his reduced physical condition, handed over almost the entire operation to Rutherfoord Harris, who fetched it up gaily, and ran with it like a schoolboy. All the various participants in the plot were codenamed 'shareholders', Jameson alternately the 'veterinary surgeon' or the 'contractor', and the coup itself the 'flotation'.

Everyone was keenly excited by the whole extravaganza, not least Jameson, whose role was to provide the initial armed thrust of the coup. In its simplest terms, he was to base himself on the borders of Bechuanaland and Transvaal with a force of some 600 men, and at a signal from Rhodes, he would ride to Johannesburg, seize the goldfields and allow the government of the Transvaal to collapse at its leisure. When Chamberlain heard this, it became immediately apparent to him why Rhodes needed a base of operations in Bechuanaland, and he promptly gave authorisation, although he did not allow himself to be directly informed of why and how.

From the unofficial British standpoint, the Boer republics had run their course, and it was time. In common with her European allies, Britain was now looking to a major war sometime in the next few decades, and the general strategic value of South Africa could not, under those circumstances, be compromised. The presence of Germany in southern Africa was bad enough, but should Berlin seek to forge an alliance with Pretoria, the risk to British imperial interests in the region would be unacceptable. If Rhodes could pull off a significant political shift in South Africa without war, and take the republics out of the picture, then Chamberlain was willing to let him try. If he succeeded, then all well and good, and if he failed, well then, that was his affair.

In fact, the whole business began to unravel almost at the moment that it was conceived. Catastrophic lapses of confidentiality meant that everyone knew exactly what was about to happen, not least the Boers. Besides that, affluence is hardly the seedbed of revolution. In an environment where anyone, from the local Indian trader to the head of a corporation might be a millionaire, talk of revolt was certainly not to be

taken seriously. One or two reformist firebrands drove the agenda, but even they wilted as the moment drew near. The only one to hold firm was Jameson, poised at the police camp in Pitsani, on the frontier of Transvaal and Bechuanaland. The whimpering of Rhodes in Cape Town, gnawing his fingernails in anxiety, influenced Jameson, not in the slightest. Upon Rhodes' final appeal to call the whole business off, Jameson cut the telegraph line, spurred his horse, and crying 'hip-hurrah', charged off at the head of his little army.

When news reached Rhodes that Jameson had indeed launched the raid, he was crushed. As Caesar once remarked, if you must break the law, do so to seize power, but in every other instance, obey it. Well, Rhodes, as history would confirm, did not take control, but merely broke the law. As with everyone else, the Boer civil defence was forewarned and was waiting for Jameson as he appeared on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The only sign of a popular uprising in Johannesburg was an Englishman on a bicycle who appeared before the shootout to wish them all luck. As dawn rose over Johannesburg, the raiders found their way forward blocked by a strong Boer contingent of suited men who had hurried away from New Year celebrations to confront the 'invasion'. Skirmishes followed, and several of the raiders were killed or wounded. After a few hours, Jameson withdrew to escape sniper fire and to try and outflank entrenched Boer positions. A typically droll message was sent to Johannesburg stating that although his raiders had fought one or two 'scrimmages', they were all right, and in good spirits, although a little assistance would nonetheless be appreciated.

The Boers had no difficulty in tracking Jameson's movements overnight, and the next morning artillery was brought up. By then the raiders had been in the saddle for three days and were exhausted. Their field gun was out of shells, and rifle ammunition was running dangerously low. A brief battle was fought at the cost of thirty British lives before Jameson accepted the inevitable, and surrendered.

A very ticklish international incident then played out as the matter was put in some perspective. The Boers, of course, had much to say, while the central European powers grumbled in irritation at yet another example of British disregard for the rules. Jameson and his surviving raiders were held briefly in the Old Fort Prison in Johannesburg while negotiations were underway to extradite them to Britain. Chamberlain denied, denied and denied again, which left Rhodes carrying the proverbial can. The dust

settled in the end, but Rhodes never really recovered. It might be said that he survived, and he certainly did, but his political career was mostly over, and his business career deeply compromised.

What neither he nor Jameson gave much thought to during those challenging times was the effect that all of this was having in Rhodesia. Of course, the white settler community backed Jameson to the hilt, cried out in support of Rhodes and generally thumped the table and joined in the chorus. The blacks, on the other hand, observed something entirely different. Jameson had sourced the manpower to mount his raid from Rhodesia, utilising almost the entire standing police force, as well as a number of civilians. What this practically meant was that Rhodesia was nearly entirely undefended.

19
Rebellion and Victory

Of the Threshing and the Dancing Songs, and the Chants that lead to War – **Kingsley Fairbridge**

William Usher, a long-time resident of Matabeleland, was a tall, gaunt and austere man, an itinerate trader, and an assimilated, pro-native liberal. Married to an amaNdebele woman, he was fluent in isiNdebele and had every reason to know what he was talking about. Periodically he took to visiting the offices of the local head of administration to warn that rumours were afoot of a violent uprising. The Chief Native Commissioner, also a man with his figure on the pulse of native life, confirmed that he too had heard such rumours. This was news, however, that the administration did not wish to hear. The whole Jameson business had upset the applecart, and while his replacement at the head of the administration was finding his feet, it was better not to inflame matters with unsubstantiated rumours. William Usher, however, was persistent, spreading the same message to the clubs and bars of Bulawayo, until eventually, the administration moved to threaten him with arrest if he continued to spread alarm and despondency.

The rumours Usher spoke of were curious. An influential religious leader by the name of M'Quati, or Mkwati, was touring the districts of Matabeleland, talking to the various indunas and urging unity among them. Very little exists in the historical record about Mkwati, other than that he was captured in an amaNdebele raid somewhere in the vicinity of the Zambezi River, after which he entered the Mlimo theocracy. Clearly politically ambitious, and something of a reversionist, he preached the restoration of the monarchy and a return to some utopian past. Initially, although a seductive idea, this did not win much support. The traditional leadership of the nation was ageing and gripped by a mood of lethargy. The events of the Jameson Raid, however, changed this, and as Mkwati pointed to the fact that Matabeleland was now almost entirely undefended, the concept of a rebellion began to gain traction.

Sometime early in 1896, probably at the moment that he learned the news of the Jameson Raid, Mkwati established his battle headquarters at the cave shrine of *Thabas-zi-ka-Mambo*, located about forty miles northeast of Bulawayo, and here he began actively reorganising the *ibutho,* the

suspended amaNdebele regimental structure. His plan was simple. A reconstituted military force would surprise the Europeans both in the countryside and in Bulawayo, while every servant or labourer would undertake to murder his employer. The date of the uprising was carefully chosen to coincide with the full moon of 28 March, and the word was circulated to this effect. Inevitable whispers of all of this found their way to the ears of those in Bulawayo who happened to be listening, but the majority were oblivious.

A week before this date, however, a detachment of native constables was set upon by a group of amaNdebele men in an argument, and some were killed. The survivors made their way to the compound of the District Native Commissioner and produced a statement. Elsewhere, in the meanwhile, another black policeman was murdered, and news again soon reached the Native Commissioner. The following day, a cable was sent to Bulawayo, which was received in the office of the Native Department. At precisely the same moment, the news was entering the headquarters of police of the murder of a group of European miners and traders in Insiza. As the day progressed, more reports began to filter in, and gradually it dawned on the administration that they had a rebellion on their hands. It would seem that the violent incidents of the night before had prematurely triggered the uprising, and once started, it could not be called off.

The initial reaction in Bulawayo was panic. The acting administrator, Andrew Duncan, took personal command, and a council of defence was quickly appointed. This included three members of the current ‘honourable and military’, General Digby Willoughby and Captains Nicholson and Garden. Their first orders were for those members of the Matabeleland Mounted Police present, under the command of Inspector Southey, to mount a patrol to Insiza to rescue a group of besieged settlers. In the meanwhile, a trickle of refugees into Bulawayo quickly turned into a flood. It was becoming clear that the uprising was general. As the defences of Bulawayo were established and fortified, and an ad hoc civil defence put in place, several daring patrols were sent out to bring in as many beleaguered Europeans in from the countryside as possible. Those they could not rescue either died or held out, but by March 30, security around Bulawayo became so precarious that the decision was made to consolidate, and no more rescues were attempted.

Soon Bulawayo was under siege, and the situation very grave indeed. Duncan held a public meeting to issue a general report, and to remind the many able-bodied men still present in Bulawayo that under the terms of their contracts they owed the Company military service. This was hardly necessary, since gruesome tales were already circulating of events taking place in the countryside, so there was no doubt in anyone's mind what was required. Rather late in the day, the native police were disarmed, but not before 200 of their number crossed over to the enemy with their weapons. All the main approaches to town were barricaded, garrisoned and armed with artillery pieces and machine guns. A robust defensive position was built in the centre of town for the last stand. Capture was not an attractive option, so everyone understood that if push came to shove, it would be a fight to the death.

Some time in the middle of April, the amaNdebele abandoned their various sieges and operations in the countryside and begun to concentrate in much larger numbers around Bulawayo. The residents were in somewhat more buoyant spirit by then, for there had been time to prepare good defences, and the city was well fortified and solidly garrisoned. It would take a stiff amaNdebele campaign to get through, which was indeed possible, and there was no complacency, but the panic of a month or so earlier had given way to a steadier resolve. Initially, the amaNdebele did nothing but observe, although some bold among them crept into town at night and killed herd boys and stole cattle. Occasional shootouts at checkpoints were reported, but on the whole, the situation remained static.

In the end, it was the besieged who took the fight to the enemy. By then a handful of separate militias had formed – the 'Bulawayo Field Force', for example, or 'Grey's Scouts', and a small commando of Afrikaner settlers who formed up under their own standard. Under the command of the few military men present, these units began to take on a more offensive posture, engaging the amaNdebele in a series of mobile skirmishes. These encounters were usually fleeting and indecisive, claiming many amaNdebele casualties without materially altering the status quo.

Rhodesian campaign scholarship has tended to identify poor command and decision-making as the chief amaNdebele failure, and indeed, although the element of surprise had already been squandered, a quick and decisive attack against Bulawayo might still have brought victory. How that victory would have played out in the long term is less

sure, but at the very least a massacre would have been the result. Another apparent blunder was the missed opportunity to sever communications with the south. The route to Mafeking through the Mangwe Pass was never threatened and remained open throughout the rebellion. It has been suggested that the reason for this was that the district fell under the control of a Mlimo priest who did not support the uprising, but others have suggested, perhaps more practically, that the route was kept open for whites to flee, which appeared to be the general expectation. Either way, it was this fact more than any other that ensured the survival of the colony, by allowing a relief column to eventually get through.

In the meanwhile, the twin powers of Britain and the British South Africa Company were hard at work organising precisely that. Like almost everybody else, Rhodes was entirely caught off guard by the news, and his first instinct was to keep things both as quiet and cheap as possible. Again he was walking a tightrope between appealing for imperial assistance and the financial burden of another war. However it washed out, the expense of it would mostly be borne by the Company, and by Rhodes himself, while blame for it, in one way or another, would lie with Doctor Jameson.

Rhodes, in fact, first learned of the outbreak of rebellion as he was on his way into the colony from Beira, returning to the Cape from London where he faced a Parliamentary Select Committee investigating the events of the Jameson Raid. He had, of course, by then resigned his office as Cape premier, only narrowly retaining the Royal Charter and his position of managing director of the Company, although in due course he would lose that too. For the moment, he held *de facto* control of the Company, and throughout the remainder of the Matabele Rebellion, was a keen and interested observer.

In fact, the whole thing probably came as a godsend to Rhodes. It was a distraction when he desperately needed just that, and an opportunity to feel engaged with something elemental, and good. Of course, his decision to drop in on the situation in Matabeleland also allowed him to miss the first session of the Cape Parliament, which was of some relief to him and everyone else. At that moment he was searching for some sort of absolution, and perhaps more than anything to confirm to himself, and to the world, that he was still a man of destiny, still an important person. Arriving in Salisbury in the middle of a frenzied panic to mount a relief of Bulawayo, Rhodes quietly took command, calmed everybody down and put

matters in perspective. Men were now decamping Mashonaland to relieve Matabeleland, but what about the maShona?

The reply to this question was a rather lip-curling assurance from the local civil establishment that nothing of the sort might be expected of the maShona. They just did not have it in them, and with that assurance, a relief column was assembled, comprising police and volunteers, which before long was on the long road to Bulawayo. The amaNdebele, in the meanwhile, held the siege of the city but continued to dither over any decisive action, losing the initiative by degrees every day.

Rhodes' Salisbury Volunteer Force arrived in Bulawayo on June 1, 1896, without a shot being fired, just one day ahead of the Imperial Matabeleland Relief Force, under the command of General Sir Frederick Carrington. On Carrington's staff were Colonel Robert Baden-Powell and Major Herbert Plumer. Including the Salisbury column, Carrington now had at his disposal nearly 2,000 irregular white troops with a variety of native attachments. He decided to strike immediately. On 6 June he sent out a strong patrol that contacted the enemy in strength a few miles southeast of Bulawayo. A running battle followed, and with the help of machine guns and light artillery, the amaNdebele were quickly routed with the loss of some 300 warriors.

In British military parlance, this was what is known as a 'bloody nose', and the amaNdebele retreated to lick their wounds and consider their position. It was quite evident by then that the siege of Bulawayo was defeated, and with British forces now flooding into the country, the war was manifestly lost. Without any particular strategy or objective, the impis then split up, with some seeking refuge in the Matopos Hills and others in the hills of Thabas aMambo. Carrington decided to deal with the latter first, and Thabas aMambo was routed in a hard-fought action on July 5, after which the defenders moved overland to Matopos, there joining the bulk of the fugitive impis. Thabas aMambo was a religious site, a redoubt, but the Matopos was, as it remains today, is an extensive region of tumbling hills and rocky outcrops, well weathered and broken, and ideal for long-term defence. How to deal with his was indeed a conundrum. Rhodes and the imperial command both desired a speedy and cost-effective end to the affair, but it was imperative also that defeat be comprehensive, well understood and accepted. No single induna of impi was to be left in any doubt that Matabeleland was conquered. After a series of costly but

inconclusive engagements in and around the Matopos, Carrington realised how difficult this would be, and he came to the conclusion that the campaign must carry on through to the following season. If the amaNdebele could not be routed, they would need to be starved out.

When Rhodes heard this, he was horrified. The cost of it all would far exceed anything the British South Africa Company could sustain out of its own pocket, and if the matter was dealt with by Imperial command, manpower and resources, then Matabeleland would come under Imperial jurisdiction. The Company would be left with Mashonaland, and in fact, almost at the moment that the situation in Matopos came under discussion in Bulawayo, news came in of an outbreak of violence in Mashonaland. The maShona, sensing the same opportunity, rose up in rebellion almost at the moment that the Salisbury Relief Column entered Matabeleland.

Fortunately, the two rebellions were never coordinated, but the same pattern of attacks against isolated mines and settlements saw a significant initial death toll among whites, some 120 in total. In the case of the maShona, although politically dispersed, there were numerous individual chiefs and paramount leaders able to launch coordinated attacks once the opening frenzy had subsided. However, as had been the case in Matabeleland, it was the local spiritual hierarchy that was identified as leading the fight from the front, and from this, two particular figures emerged.

The first was Gumporeshumba, a powerful medium of the Shona spirit, ‘Kaguvi’, or ‘Kagubi’, whose name he adopted. The second was Nehanda, or *Mbuya* Nehanda, a female spirit medium of significant authority, but with a temperament both cruel and volatile. These two very quickly became icons of what was later styled the *Chimurenga*, or the ‘Struggle’. The two were eventually captured, tried and hung, which, apart from creating two influential martyrs of the liberation movement, took most of the sting out of the rebellion, after which it became merely a matter of bloody and decisive mopping up.

Back in Bulawayo, in the meanwhile, General Carrington allowed none of this to divert his attention from the Matabeleland campaign. He allowed the Salisbury Volunteers return to Mashonaland with an additional 100 men of the Matabeleland Relief Force, and directed a unit of Imperial regulars, who were en-route from England to the Cape, to disembark in Beira and make their way directly to Salisbury. After that he commenced a

policy of scorched earth, destroying cattle, crops and grain reserves, placing the Matopos under effective siege before settling in to starve the amaNdebele out.

Rhodes, however, had been thinking hard, and the conclusion that he reached was that a negotiated truce was the only solution. He was aware that the various imperials in Bulawayo would never agree to any such thing, so he kept the idea to himself, confiding only in a handful of people closest to him, and one British officer by the name of Colonel Robert Baden Powell. Baden Powell would go on to become one of the most recognisable establishment figures of his age, as founder and leader of the Boys Scouts movement. Then, however, he was a thirty-nine-year-old reconnaissance officer attached to the imperial force, who was a rare creature of the British Army insofar as he was an original thinker. He saw the potential immediately of a negotiated peace, and to aid the effort he introduced his 'native' scout John Grootboom.

Here we introduce another unique character in the drama of the Matabele Rebellion. John Grootboom was a 'Cape Boy', which in contemporary parlance means simply a non-white Cape native recruited for service, and the context of the Cape, 'non-white' could mean many things. John Grootboom, however, loyal to Colonel 'Baking Powder', and at significant personal risk, he agreed to enter the Matopos alone to make contact with the amaNdebele leadership. The breakthrough came early in August when he was able to gain the confidence of an elderly woman who was, at least according to the conventional telling of the tale, a junior wife of Mzilikazi. It was through her that initial contacts were made, and during the shuttle diplomacy that followed, word naturally leaked out.

Rhodes in this instance was acting as a free agent. He held no official position or rank, and when news of what he had been up to reached the administration and imperial command, they were irritated, to say the very least. Talk of compromise or clemency was quite simply out of the question, and besides which, Sir Richard Martin, Imperial Representative in Bulawayo, felt it was his prerogative alone to treat with the amaNdebele. This, of course, was true, but in the context of everything that had passed before, who precisely was he?

As a martial race, the amaNdebele understood and respected strong leadership, and although though he was disgraced in the eyes of the world, Rhodes remained *Ilodzi*, a great and powerful man in the eyes of the

amaNdebele, a conqueror and chief of a vast empire. His was a name well known to the leadership, and their agreement in the end to negotiate was based on his name and his authority alone. As a private agent he could not be stopped, and as Cecil John Rhodes, who would dare. The amaNdebele, in agreeing to a preliminary meeting, did not demand that Rhodes be present, because, in the words of writer and journalist Vere Stent, "they did not venture to summon so great a man as he to them, but if he came he would be welcome."

The first formal *Indaba* took place on Friday, 21 August. Rhodes' delegation included Johann Colenbrander, Rhodes' friend and colleague Doctor Hans Sauer, Vere Stent and of course John Grootboom. A native interpreter by the name of John Makunga also attended. Rhodes and his party arrived first and waited in the shade of a tree until a group of indunas cautiously stepped down from the surrounding hills, carrying a white flag. The procession was watched by thousands of whispering tribesmen lining the surrounding hills. As the party slowly descended, Rhodes turned and remarked to Vere Stent: "This is very exciting. This is one of the incidents in life that make it worth living."

The Indaba began with forty-four indunas gathered in a semicircle around Rhodes, who seated himself halfway up a sizable termite mound. An old induna by the name of Somabulana introduced himself and his people by way of a prolonged saga, which began with the nation's origins as members of the Zulu and traced the break-up that led to their exodus. He spoke of the death of Mzilikazi and the reign of Lobengula, the coming of the whites, the days and months of anguish, war, the death of Lobengula and their wretched condition as a conquered nation. Rhodes heard a litany of grievances against the Company's administration, and on many occasions, Jameson was explicitly named. Such issues as cattle, land and the native police were underscored by complaints about individual native commissioners, and the treatment of amaNdebele leaders at the hands of men younger and less worldly than themselves.

While Rhodes was sensitive to these issues and enlightened to a degree, he was careful not to be drawn into questions of blame and culpability. Instead, he guided the conversation to the subject of war and peace. After some minimal horse-trading, and the settling of such matters as the removal of certain individuals from the public service, the disbanding of

the native police and the maintenance of routes for the importation of food, peace in principle was agreed upon.

A second indaba was held on the following Thursday, near the homestead of William Usher. Over 100 armed men in belligerent mood enlivened the encounter, which prompted Rhodes to remark later that the interview had just a sufficient spice of danger to make it interesting. Included in Rhodes' party this time were Colonel Plumer and some members of his staff, and two women, Molly Colenbrander, Johann Colenbrander's wife, and her sister Agatha.

Initially, the atmosphere was charged as younger men talking over their elders and shouting threats disrupted the discussion. In due course, Johann Colenbrander closed the meeting and refused to continue until all weapons had been laid aside. After some time this was achieved, but it did little to curb the insolence of the younger men present. Rhodes then refused to respond or listen any further, and would not proceed until the induna Dhliso imposed some order on his retinue and silenced the younger men. Again it took some time for this to be accomplished. Discussions then were brief and to the point. The indunas were in favour of peace, but they asked for time to test the opinion of their people. While Rhodes agreed, he warned that continued war would result in starvation and annihilation of the amaNdebele. Little time remained that season for the people to leave the protection of the hills and venture back into the valleys and plains to cultivate their crops.

A third indaba was held a few days later, this time with some official formality in the form of Sir Richard Martin, with an escort of twelve lancers flying the Union Jack. Also present was Jameson's replacement, the Earl Grey, his wife, and once again Molly Colenbrander. In the first instance, Earl Grey addressed the combined assembly, recapitulating most of the points previously covered, and such agreements as had been made. On behalf of Her Majesty, he endorsed Rhodes' efforts before making way for Sir Richard Martin, who added little other than his own endorsement of Rhodes. A general amnesty was then approved, excluding only those who had committed cold-blooded murder. Rhodes then closed the proceedings with an appeal to the amaNdebele to lay down their arms and come down from the hills, because now, he assured them, they had nothing to fear.

As Vere Stent later wrote: "Throughout the conference, which lasted some hours and was of a deeply interesting nature, past grievances were as

far as possible discussed, and the lines of the *modus vivendi* gone into thoroughly."

Rhodes remained on hand for some time afterwards to canvass opinion and deal with individual petitions, although initially few indunas visited him. This changed when news spread that not only was tobacco being dispensed as gifts, but also other offerings such as clothes and blankets. In no time Rhodes was besieged by petitioners and soon not just the fact of peace, but the spirit of it became a reality. In the mythology of white Rhodesia, this was a seminal moment. It portrayed a very different Cecil Rhodes, making perhaps a shift in his worldview, and an adjustment of priorities. He was now concerned with his monuments, and his legacy, and the moral basis upon which his colony would be built. Needless to say, he preserved Matabeleland for the Company, and for so long as he lived, the terms under which peace had been agreed would be honoured.

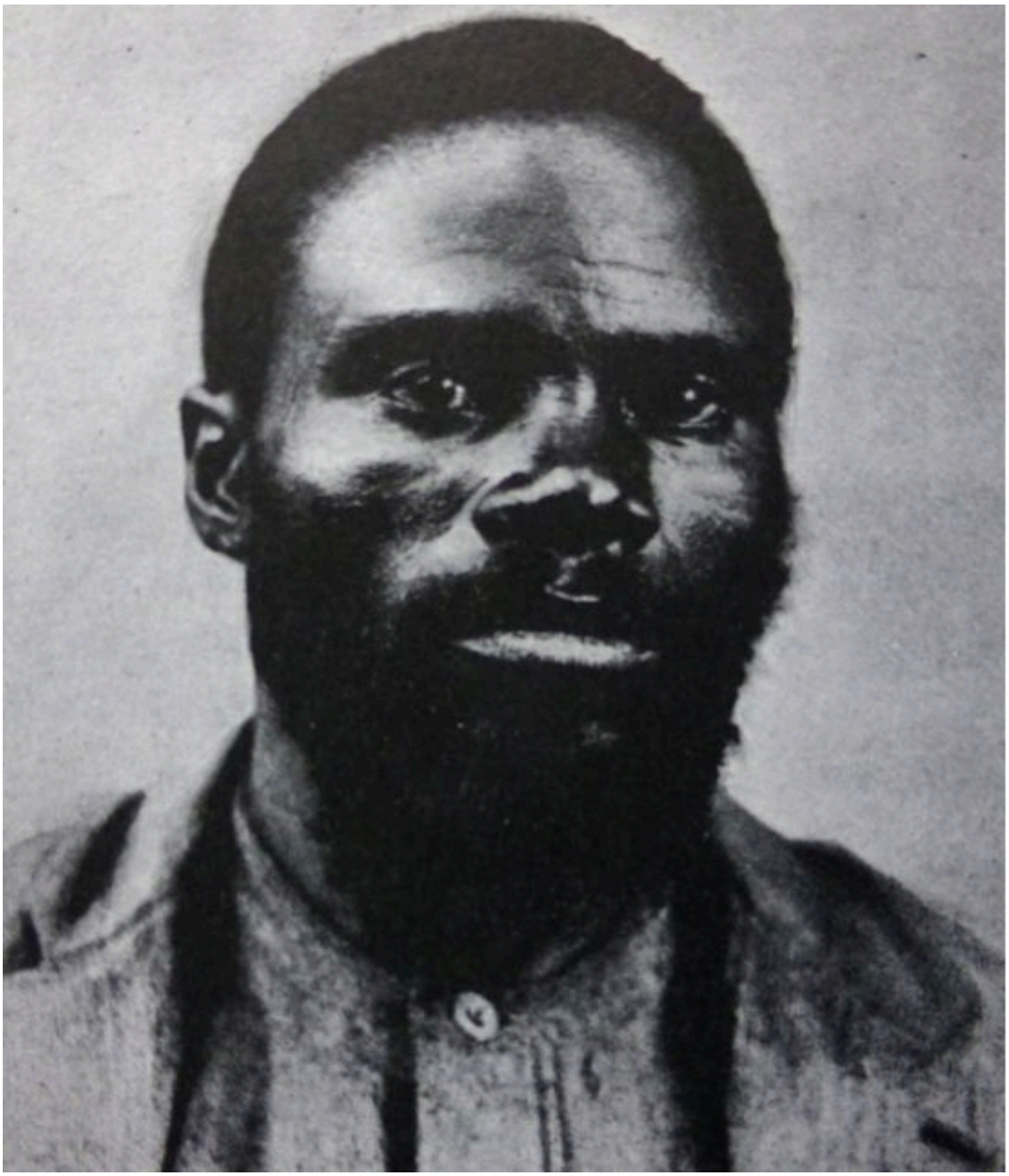
Sadly, affairs in Mashonaland ended on a different note, and indeed there were few in the country with the opinion that the MaShona were worthy of any such effort. It had always been perceived that they held no unique authority, and would merely fall into whatever accommodation was reached with the amaNdebele. The defeat of the amaNdebele in 1893 certainly liberated a majority of maShona, but it also had the effect of rekindling their own nationalist sensibilities. Unfortunately for the prosecution of their revolt, some individually powerful chiefs acted in the general spirit of rebellion, but without any coordination. This meant that no discernible leadership could be consulted with or brought to parley. After the initial attacks on isolated settlements, the maShona adopted a purely defensive posture that meant individual chieftainships and districts had to be cleared separately as part of an ongoing programme. Rhodes, who was engaged in his Indabas in Matabeleland, was not available then to lend his weight to a compromise, besides which, the imperial authorities were anxious that he did not.

Once the uprising in Mashonaland became general, the authorities were quick to act. Salisbury itself did not come under threat, which allowed the war to be focused in the countryside more effectively. The Salisbury Volunteers easily cleared the road from Bulawayo to Salisbury, and Colonel Edwin Alderson, commanding a force of 480 mounted infantry, landed in Beira according to Carrington's instructions, launching an immediate attack on the kraal of an influential maShona leader, Chief Makoni. The battle was

inconclusive but sufficient to incapacitate Makoni, who offered to surrender two weeks later in exchange for amnesty. Rhodes favoured this, as did the Company administration, but Sir Richard Martin demurred, and no amnesty was offered. Makoni went back to the countryside and was routed late in August, after which he was taken into custody and summarily tried and shot on the perimeter of his kraal.

Rhodes arrived in Salisbury late in November and persuaded Sir Richard Martin to relax the military pressure by returning Colonel Alderson and his mounted infantry to the Cape. Matabeleland Relief Force troops had earlier left the territory, and Martin reluctantly agreed. Rumblings of alarm reached Salisbury from Whitehall, but fortunately for Rhodes, nothing untoward happened. Much of the work had already been completed, and all that really remained was extensive mopping up that continued until the end of the year. This was typically achieved by dynamiting the host of caves and rock shelters where the rebels remained hidden. The strategy was highly effective but enormously costly in maShona lives. In July, Martin himself routed Chief Mashiangombe, and most of the other rebel leaders were then after that driven into exile or executed.

Kaguvi surrendered in October, and Mbuya Nehanda was taken in after a fight sometime in December. Both were tried for murder and hanged in Salisbury. Before he died, Kaguvi requested and was given Catholic rites after accepting baptism at the last minute. Nehanda, on the other hand, was defiant, loquacious and savage to the end. Mkwati's fortunes waned until chiefs, wary of the trouble he had caused, disposed of him. He reported to have been killed and dismembered in such a way that he could not reincarnate. By the end of the year, the uprisings were all mostly over.



John Grootboom

20
The Birth of Rhodesia

The vessel splits, the thought survives – **Kingsley Fairbridge**

The 'Great Indaba', as the event came to be known, although acknowledged as Rhodes' finest hour, was nonetheless blemished by yet more dishonest brokerage. He promised the amaNdebele the restoration of their traditional lands, and to this promise at least, he was initially true. The amaNdebele came out of the Matopos and returned to resettle their old homes, but their homes were now owned by white landowners, most of whom were absentee. In a secret negotiation, however, Rhodes extracted an agreement that no rentals would be charged on this land for two years. Here, once again, was the quintessential Rhodes, this time, described by South African author Sarah Gertrude Millin, perhaps his most sympathetic biographer, as follows:

"Yes, it is a new Rhodes, a troubled, divided Rhodes, a Rhodes speaking, as he says, to two audiences: one in London and one in Rhodesia, torn between his settlers and his shareholders, his dreams and his directorate, his beautiful hypothesis and the little ugly facts."

By the time that this particular ugly fact was revealed, however, it was too late to protest, for Rhodes had long since left the territory. In his wake, the African man was pushed into obscurity, where he would remain for almost a century. Rhodes, to his credit, did try to enforce some sort of fair usage of the amaNdebele, but his efforts lasted only as long as he lived. The smaller figures that remained behind were unable to act in quite the way, and in the end, the 'Matabele Rebellion', or the 'Second Matabele War', confirmed to all the Company's conquest of Rhodesia, and by the accepted rules of conquest, it now owned title to the country.

By then the settlers were beginning to return to the countryside, with more arriving all the time. A year later, the railway line reached Bulawayo, making possible a rapid mobilisation of force at any time. The amaNdebele were now a broken people, and even more so were the maShona, for whom the aftermath of the uprising was bitter indeed. The Europeans, on the other hand, were prepared, energised, increasing in numbers and militant in ways not noticed in the past. The violence of the uprisings left an angry residue, and an attitude of antagonism that replaced the indifference of the past,

when the black wan was merely primitive and extraneous, to be used, but never despised. Now it was clear that the black man could not be trusted, and he was not.

Rhodes left the colony late in 1896, but not before he was forced to attend to the grievances that had long been incubating the settler community. Anger quickly came to a head after the two rebellions, and with Rhodes finally among them, many settlers demanded that he provide answers. Primarily, anger was directed at the antics of Jameson, who had disparaged the reputation of the colony and almost destroyed it with his hare-brained raid on the Transvaal. Jameson was blamed for the rebellions, and by proxy, so was the Company. The blood of the innocents was on both their hands and Rhodes could find few honest words to disagree. Knowing this he did not try but turned instead to his chequebook.

The critics were silenced with compensation to the extent of £350,000, which amounted to a staggering personal intercession, measured in many millions today. Of this, £255,000 went to Matabeleland and £100,000 to Mashonaland. For a small general population, this was uncommonly generous. The amount was added to the steeply mounting personal cost to Rhodes of protecting the Charter, and the Company, and of keeping the dream alive. All in all, the Jameson Raid and the two rebellions cost Rhodes and Alfred Beit nearly £400,000 apiece.

Complaints about Jameson, however, were just the beginning. Occupation and settlement of the colony had been premised on the expectation of gold, but there was no gold. This, however, did not stop the Company from imposing restrictive controls over whatever minerals were found. These controls, in essence, required mine operators to write the Company in as an equal partner in any strike and to share the profits of actual production. This was the foundation of the British South Africa Company stock flotation, but the policy was conceived in the expectation of big producers. In reality, the mining sector amounted to a handful of hopefuls scratching for nuggets, and to them, the policy was manifestly unfair. On the other hand, capital-rich corporations, and there were one or two of these, flourished. Most traded on ghost strikes and optimistic share issues, often founded on nothing more than the discovery of old native mine workings. So long as investment remained brisk, they continued in business.

And, of course, there were other grievances. Company rule was cronyist, and corrupt. Jameson had cultivated an informality of business that still affected the way that the colony governed itself. Regulations and stipulations were waived when money changed hands, and a great many land and mining deals done in the early years were deeply suspect. Many of these deals were done in London, and quite a number of landowners and businessmen with interests in the colony never set foot in it. It is understandable, therefore, that the rank and file of settlers felt duped. It was they who had occupied the territory, garrisoned it and fought its wars, only to be locked out of its riches.

Rhodes acknowledged all this and agreed to make changes. For the time being, however, those changes would be minimal. The Company had no choice but to do what was necessary to maintain the loyalty of countless small and large capital investors who kept the whole thing afloat. Settlers came, and settlers went, but if the public subscription collapsed, the game would be over relatively quickly. Not until after Rhodes' death would mining regulations be relaxed sufficiently to give the small man what could be regarded as a sporting chance.

These issues were mostly economic and so easy for Rhodes to address. More difficult was the abstract question of governance, and in particular the continued administration of a Crown colony by a private commercial company. Company rule in the traditional sense was really only applicable when the white population was either employed by the company or contracted to it. This was no longer the case for Rhodesia. A growing and diverse community of taxpaying settlers was establishing roots and forming a civil society, and many believed company rule was redundant. This was something, however, that Rhodes was unwilling to discuss. Far too much money had already been sunk into the enterprise for it to fail. However, for the time being, those for and against Company rule were fairly evenly split, and thus no significant changes were necessary for the short term, although the issue was on the table, and there it would remain.

Another point worth noting here is the hint of antagonism that entered the relationship between the settlers of Rhodesia and the general, metropolitan population of Britain, as a consequence of the two rebellions. Sir Richard Martin conducted an inquiry into the causes of the disturbances, that served to illuminate much of the ill-treatment meted out to the natives of the territory since its occupation. To the liberal establishment of England,

this was manna, and from the evangelicals and Fabians could heard a steady drumbeat of condemnation. To those steeped in moderation and fair play, and secure under the rule of law, criticism of this nature might have appeared justified, but to those on the frontline, it was not. When in Rome we do as the Romans do, and conditions of African violence often invited the same in kind. When living beyond the pale, rules of conduct are necessarily less defined. The settlers believed that their sacrifices were for Queen and Empire, and for that, they were owed a debt of gratitude, not disapprobation.

Rhodes, in the meanwhile, faced two fundamental questions. The first was what time limit should be placed on British South Africa Company rule, and the second was what degree of representation could the settlers expect in the meanwhile. These were indeed interesting, and ticklish questions. Rhodesia was fast emerging as a settled rather than a commercial colony, and in the usual course of events, the settlers might expect authority to be shared between a local representative assembly and Whitehall. Rhodes, however, also had a board of directors to consider. Staggering amounts of money had been invested so far, and not one penny of that had been returned. In one way or another, Rhodesia needed to show a profit, and until it did, the Company could not let it go. No one was happy about it, least of all the Company, but that was the was the way it was.

Thus on 10 November 1896, a few days before his departure, Rhodes delivered a much-anticipated speech to a selected body of settlers. In it, he proposed a semi-elective system that would lead eventually to self-government, while in the short term, the colony would remain under an administrator appointed by the Board of Directors. The Administrator would lead a legislative assembly comprising himself, five members nominated by the Company and four elected. Property and income qualifications would apply, which were aimed less at excluding blacks, who were not really recognised yet in political terms, than limiting the influence of poor whites.

The imperial factor, as always the cautious moderator, would play the third role. This would be a little anomalous insofar as direct rule was vigorously forsworn, yet guidance and control over the affairs of the colony, in the aftermath of the Jameson era, was inescapable. To the English exchequer it was imperative that the new colony cost no money and cause no trouble. Joseph Milner, current High Commissioner at the Cape, to

whom it had fallen to resolve the future constitutional status of Rhodesia, felt this quandary most keenly. He favoured Company rule into the foreseeable future, but with close Imperial supervision.

To this end, the Colonial Office reserved certain crucial powers to itself. Milner had an extremely low opinion of Rhodes, and Jameson even more so, and he believed, as most in the establishment did, that crude and irresponsible administration lay at the root of the rebellions. In future, matters related to native affairs would be superintended by a Resident Commissioner, who would sit on the legislative assembly and report directly to the High Commissioner. The Resident Commissioner would also fill the role of a Commandant-General, controlling the police and armed forces. Regarding all of this, the Company was reasonably content, for it reserved the right to act on fiscal issues without consultation, which was all that really mattered. These arrangements were contained and formalised in the colony's first instrument of government, the Order in Council of 1898. This device represented a compromise between imperial and Company interests, while also conceding some formal if nominal involvement to the settlers. For the time being, it sufficed, and the settler body was, if not elated, then at least satisfied.

The time thus came for Rhodes to leave the territory that bore his name. His next ordeal was to submit to the odious business of a Cape parliamentary inquiry into the Jameson Raid. Before he left, however, he briefly made the acquaintance of the younger cousin of William Ernest Fairbridge. A second branch of the Fairbridge family had recently arrived from South Africa, and it was young Kingsley Fairbridge who best captured the combination of stress and serenity that afflicted Rhodes. In his later autobiography Kingsley Fairbridge wrote:

"I knew that great trouble had befallen Mr Rhodes. My Father had told me that his best friend, Dr Jameson, had been put in jail; that Mr Rhodes himself had resigned, or was about to resign, his public appointments both in England and South Africa. The 'Raid' had left dissention, and many of Rhodes' old associates at the Cape had turned their backs on him. Finally, Groote Schuur, his beautiful house near my old playground of Devils Peak, had burned to the ground, and with it the treasures of early Dutch and Huguenot art which he had spent years in collecting. All this had happened in that one year of 1896, and men said he was greatly changed and that his hair turned white."

21
A New Age

Show me your garden, and I shall tell you what you are – **Alfred Austin**

From Salisbury, Rhodes returned to Beira where he boarded a ship for the Cape. For a fortnight he brooded on events and thought deeply. The days of Jameson's maverick rule were now well in the past, and the colony now needed someone to place it on a proper, organised and legal footing. The choice he eventually made was the current head of the Cape Prime Minister's Office, William Henry Milton.

William Milton was a very interesting choice. A year younger than Rhodes, he was a product of the British middle classes, a past pupil of Marlborough College and twice capped as an England fullback. He emigrated to the Cape in 1878, and joining the civil service, debuted as Captain of the South African cricket side in the test series of 1891-92. Milton, Rhodes reasoned, would blend well with the emerging character of the Rhodesian settler community, and his much-admired administrative skills would drag the colony out of the mess that Jameson left it. A certain amount of correspondence followed, and in July 1897, Milton accepted a contract with the British South Africa Company, but on condition that he could remain in South Africa long enough to play three scheduled first-class cricket matches, two for Natal and one for Western Province.

There was, however, a touch of confusion, and a little unpleasantness to be overcome before Milton could take up his appointment. The incident is worth reporting only because it defines the proprietary view that Rhodes held of his colony, and how he reserved an absolute power of veto. Acting administrator, Albert Grey, who took over as Jameson left the stage, held the prerogative to appoint his successor, which he did. The position was promised to his former private secretary Arthur Lawley. Lawley, thirty-six years old, was a mid-ranking aristocrat and professional colonial civil servant, and one of the reviled 'honourable and military'. The decision was approved by the Board of Directors, which placed Milton's personal appointment by Rhodes in some jeopardy. Although anxious not to offend Lord Grey, who was a dear and personal friend, and nor for that matter the Board of Directors, Rhodes nonetheless was determined to uphold his own decision.

There followed a rather cordial battle of wills between Rhodes on the one hand and Lord Grey and the Board on the other, but in the end, Rhodes prevailed by way of a face-saving compromise. The colony would temporarily have two administrators, one in Bulawayo and one in Salisbury, the latter of which would be Milton himself, and after a suitable period, Arthur Lawley would resign. This he duly did, taking up the post of Governor of Western Australia in 1901. He was, of course, not replaced.

Milton, in the meanwhile, set straight to work, and his first priority was an immediate overhaul of the civil service. Jameson had left things much as they were when he took over from Colquhoun, and during his brief term Lord Grey did very little to advance this. The civil service at that time comprised the department heads, clerks and bookkeepers that one might find in any other business, and they ran the affairs of the colony along the lines of a large, departmental corporation, which, of course, is what it was. The administration remained the primary business of the colony, which had the effect of elevating this clique of glorified civil servants to something of a social elite, rather like the office of the Viceroy of India, although without the assiduous attention of Indian functionaries to make it all work.

In the absence of an army, in the meanwhile, the BSACo Police dealt with internal security as well as all the usual responsibilities of law enforcement. The latter was in cooperation with the Southern Rhodesia Constabulary, which was an urban police service confined mostly to Bulawayo and Salisbury. This agency eventually merged with what became the British South Africa Police, or the BSAP in 1897. The judicial system of the colony comprised an amateur and part-time bench that arbitrated a system of laws seconded for the most part from Britain and the South African colonies.

As a sportsman and a middle-class professional, Milton also tended to provide something of a paradigm of what a white Rhodesian male ought to be, stamped first and foremost on the civil service. Writer and policeman, Tony Tanser, reflecting on the Milton period in his 1965 memoir, *A Scantling of Time*, noted: “Whereas previously one had to be a member of the ‘la-di-da’ class to get a job in the civil service, now you had to beat the hide off a ball.”

Milton occupied the office of Company Administrator in Southern Rhodesia for seventeen-years, and during that time, it was he, almost single-handed, who established the basis of administration and justice that

would serve the nation long after Company rule had passed. He also presided over the first *bona fide* Legislative Assembly elections in the colony, provided for by the Order in Council of October 1898. This Legislative Assembly was to comprise, as per agreement with Rhodes, of four elected members, two from Matabeleland and two from Mashonaland, and five members appointed by the Board of Directors. The results of the first election showed that Doctor Hans Sauer and a certain Mr Hutchinson were elected for Matabeleland, and Colonel Grey and Mr Grimmer for Mashonaland. The nominees of the Company were Sir Thomas Scanlen, who was also de facto Attorney General, Justice Vincent and Messers Castens, Griffin and Orpen. Resident Commissioner was Lieutenant Colonel Sir Marshal Clarke KCMG. The first meeting of the legislature was held on 15 May 1899 in Salisbury, with William Milton presiding.

Until that time, settlers in Rhodesia had been mostly exempt from formal taxation, and generally, the required revenues were provided through the treasury of the British South Africa Company. One of the first tenets of an organised government, therefore, was self-sufficiency in matters of finance. Not altogether unpredictably, a motion tabled to introduce taxation was met with a furious rebuttal from the elected members. The Chartered Company members, of course, were no less adamant that taxation should apply. Their argument was simply that the settlers demanded representation, and here it was, and naturally, with representation there came responsibility.

Next, the administration proposed the imposition of customs duties on certain classes of goods imported into the country, and again this was met with howls of dismay from the elected seats. Their counter-argument went along the lines that, while there could be no disputing a population's liability to taxation, this should in no way exceed one third of annual expenditure, and should exclude the cost of maintaining the police force, since it was thanks to Company folly that an armed police force was necessary for the colony at all.

To this, the administration replied that expenditure for the year 1899 was calculated at £739,713. Income, including customs, licensing and royalties, was set down at £381,000. This left the Company with a deficit of £358k,713. The cost of maintaining the police alone was estimated at £300,000. How else, the Company asked, was it to recover this amount, which represented just one year's worth of administrative deficit?

The elected members then switched tactics and asked where it was written in the Orders in Council that the government had a right to levy taxes at all? The Company, they maintained, had a much larger stake in the country than the settlers, and therefore it should shoulder the lion's share of expenses. In fact, Article 47 of the Orders stated that no customs duties would be levied that were any more onerous than those imposed between countries of the South African Customs Union. Alfred Milner was called in to mediate, and his response was to scoff at any suggestion that the white citizens of Rhodesia were immune to a system of revenue collection that was universally applied. With this, the Company went ahead, and on 1 August 1899 imposed the first customs duties on goods entering Rhodesia.

Such was a day in the life of Milton's Rhodesia. However, if, in the year of 1899 alone, the Company was expected to absorb a loss of over £350,000, against a chorus of table-hammering by the elected members, then some sense of its dilemma becomes apparent. That the settlers clamoured for participation but baulked at assuming any financial burden was also part of that dilemma. It did, however, rather serve to underline the constant complaint that a private company had no business running a colony, but with losses on that scale, the question remained how was this administrative deficit, running now to millions, be recouped.

Insolvency, however, was not the sole preserve of the Company. While the sporting life of the colony may have required the territory's civil servants and the business elite to beat the hide off a ball, and populate the many pleasant neighbourhoods springing up in the capital, a majority of the settler community were still grappling with the essential elements of survival. The steady inward migration of settlers was still matched and sometimes exceeded by the exodus. Another of Milton's priorities, therefore, was to find a way to stem this flow.

Cured early of gold fever, most of the good men of the colony had already been washed out of the pan. For the few who remained, capital continued to be scarce in an economy where precious little economic activity was taking place. Many good men had died on the banks of the Shangani River, and of those that survived, most simply collected their booty, sold their land and their gold claims and left the colony. Many who stayed could not go due to poverty. A few had independent means and could make the best of it, but for the majority, times remained lean and uncertain.

Life went on, however, and the completion of the combined Mashonaland and Beira railway at the turn of the century certainly did ease the isolation. The Zeederberg company established the first mail coach service to Mashonaland in 1891, running from Pietersburg in the Transvaal via Fort Victoria and Fort Charter to Salisbury. In 1903, a certain Lieutenant Colonel Flint of the Southern Rhodesia Volunteers imported a small herd of camels from Maharashtra in the hope that this would prove useful for military and other purposes. The animals, however, failed to acclimatise and the experiment was abandoned. Also that year, the first motor car, a Gladiator of French manufacture, was imported by Major Charles Duly and sold to engineering contractor George Pauling.

After that, motorcars became an increasingly common sight on the dusty urban streets and bush tracks of the countryside. For a while, rickshaws were ubiquitous as urban transport, imported in quantity from Japan. In Umtali, a tram system began service in 1898, utilising a mule-drawn trolley along a single line up Main Street. In the towns and settlements, tents, huts and shanties gradually transformed into avenues of brick and corrugated iron. Supplies remained limited, of course, and luxuries rare, but thanks to the Dominican Sisters, Salisbury at least had a school and a hospital. In Bulawayo, the first copy of the *Bulawayo Chronicle* appeared on the streets on Saturday 12 October 1894, and a year later, the town boasted a roller-skating ring in the Market Hall.

The opening of Matabeleland, however, renewed some of the old faith in gold, and soon Bulawayo became the main port of entry and trading entrepôt for a new wave of miners and speculators. By the turn of the century, avenues of rough brick and corrugated iron began to replace the encampments, with occasional examples of thoughtful colonial architecture. The Bulawayo Memorial Hospital was one of these, with its domed tower, wide verandas and pointed brickwork. Bulawayo, however, rather determinedly retained its self-image as the workshop and shopfront of the new colony, while Salisbury developed its sports clubs and theatres, boulevards and parks, reflecting the continued elitism of the administration. The route for goods and equipment from the south was easier via Bulawayo than by sea to Beira, and then by rail to Salisbury. Bulawayo, therefore, became the leading centre for distribution and industry, while Salisbury developed as the hub of the highveld farming community and the pleasant home of the civil service and the business elite.

Besides newspapers, hospitals and schools, other institutions essential to Englishmen abroad were established. Trout were imported and introduced into the streams and rivers of the Eastern Highlands, and as early as February 1893, a group of eighteen citizens met in the BSAP officer's mess in Salisbury and agreed to form the Salisbury Club. Charles White, resident magistrate and third son of Baron Annaly, was elected the first chairman. Cecil Rhodes himself was a founding member, as were Jameson, Alfred Beit, Rutherfoord Harris and Lieutenant Tyndale-Biscoe. Another was the Vicomte de la Panouse, of course, whose title compensated somewhat for his continued poverty.

The Salisbury Club seeded the Bulawayo Club, and then the Umtali Club. 1909 saw the establishment of the Salisbury Sports Club, followed a few years later by Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo. The first authentic cricket tournament in the colony was organised in 1903-4 by South African cricket pioneer James Douglas Logan, the 'Laird of Matjiesfontein'. Lord Martin Hawke, a notable British cricketer and promoter, donated the cup, which was won by Matabeleland.

The Salisbury Club, in the meanwhile, negotiated reciprocal arrangements with the Rand and Kimberley clubs, and a variety of gentlemen's clubs in London and throughout the Empire. It soon became the informal meeting place for all men of consequence in the colony, and an informal debating forum that tended on occasions to eclipse affairs of state conducted in the legislative chambers, located just across the street.

In the countryside, however, things were a little different. The population of white rural settlers could be broken down into miners, storekeepers, farmers and missionaries. For them, life was seldom easy or pleasant, and conditions were often not far removed from those of the natives. Those few who were moderately successful might reside between walls of mud brick under thatch, bathe in river water carried up in tins and enjoy pit latrines, but the majority remained in mud huts or tents. Cornmeal and green vegetables were the staple diet of both black and white, with the rare inclusion of cuts of bushmeat shot and smoked for the pot. Victorian traveller and commentator Charlotte Mansfield remarked of early Rhodesia that things would only begin to improve once the tax on whisky had been trebled and gentlewomen encouraged to immigrate. She had no doubt noticed an emerging third force of half-caste children proliferating, despite fervent denials and the diligent efforts of missionaries. This phenomenon

was usually blamed on the loneliness of isolation, the lack of respectable women and the striking prevalence of alcoholism in rural communities.

This then made up the unstable bedrock of white Rhodesia, as it stood at the dawn of the twentieth century. Against a steady exodus of disillusioned pioneers, there were always men and women prepared to take their chances. One of these was Thomas Moodie, who in 1892 led a trek from Bethlehem in the Orange Free State to settle the Gaza area of the Eastern Highlands. He and his nephew Dunbar Moodie laid the foundations of what would later become the Chipinga District, one of the richest and most pleasant farming areas of Rhodesia. En route, Dunbar married his sweetheart Sarah in Fort Victoria, and the two initiated the practice of honeymooning at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins.

The Moodie Trek was followed over the next few years by a further six treks. The leader of the Du Plessis Trek spoke for most when he defined his motivation and ambitions as merely having enough land once and for all to make a living without debt. From Chipinga, some moved on to found settlements that would later become Melsetter and Cashel. This branch of settlement was led by Martinus Martin and included the large Du Plessis family, as well as some other Afrikaans speaking members. It was they who introduced a distinctly Dutch flavour to the area by endowing farms and settlements with such picturesque names as *Pietershoek*, *Groenkop*, *Hendriksdaal*, *Moodie's Nek* and *Tanknek*.

Another early immigrant was Scotsman Jock Smith, who arrived in the colony in 1898, settling in the mining town of Selukwe, where he engaged in trade, mining and farming. He later married Agnes Hodgson, daughter of a local miner, who bore him three children, Phyllis, Joan and Ian. The youngest, Ian Smith, would achieve international recognition, and notoriety as the first locally born prime minister, and the last white leader of Rhodesia.

Yet another early arrival was Rhys Fairbridge, cousin to the Argus Publishing Group agent in Salisbury, who in 1896 brought his family up from the Cape to live in Umtali. The Fairbridges were all descended from Doctor James William Fairbridge, who arrived in the Cape as district physician and surgeon in 1824. Rhys Fairbridge was a whimsical man, and despite an excellent education, a lesser achiever than his cousin Ernest. In 1891, he began work as a surveyor on the construction of the Beira

Railway, an endeavour that became one of the epic tales of Rhodesian pioneering achievement.

The Beira Railway, incidentally, was primarily constructed by the Commissioner of Public Works, George Pauling, a huge man who could, according to legend, lift his horse and carry it around the billiard table. The story of the construction of the Beira railway is one of the epics of Rhodesian history, and an engineering achievement that stands with the construction of the Uganda Railway in East Africa, the fabled 'Lunatic Line'. As it ran through the virgin bush and febrile floodplains of Portuguese East Africa, upwards of sixty per cent of black, white and 'coolie' labour were lost to malaria, blackwater fever and marauding animals.

Rhys Fairbridge, however, survived, and towards the end of the Mashona Rebellion, brought his family up from the Cape to settle. As a Company surveyor, he employed his eleven-year-old son Kingsley as a beacon builder, introducing the child to the beautiful highland environment that would later nurture the first literary commentator and unofficial poet laureate of Rhodesia. Kingsley Fairbridge was one of Rhodesia's first Rhodes Scholars, and thereafter a staunch promoter of empire migration. He would remember, and be remembered most fondly in Umtali, where he spent his boyhood tramping the hills and countryside that inspired tender, often brutal and sometimes suicidal poetry and prose.

In 1897, a retiring young Englishman by the name of Hugh Swynnerton arrived in Salisbury, at the suggestion of Sir Guy Marshall, Director of the Imperial Institute of Entomology. In Salisbury, Swynnerton worked first in the Bates and Marshall store on Second Street, before moving to Melsetter where he became a manager on Guganyana Farm. The farm was situated in a unique area of forest on the flanks of Mount Selinda, the mystique of which inspired Swynnerton to emerge later as the country's leading amateur naturalist. He conducted pioneering work in entomology, ornithology and agriculture. The endemic 'Swynnerton Robin' is a reminder of the many animal species credited to this self-effacing but pioneering immigrant.

Drifting into the colony alongside a stream of many other hopefuls came a poor Lithuanian Jew by the name of Welensky. With him, he brought his Afrikaner wife, and the family settled in the southern suburbs of Salisbury. The youngest of their thirteen children, Roland, was born in

Salisbury in 1907. In due course, Roland became a professional boxer, a railwayman and, as Sir Roy Welensky, Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. A great deal more will be heard from Sir Roy Welensky as we progress.

In the meanwhile, yet another thoughtful settler was Ethel Tawse Jollie, widow of the late Archibald Colquhoun, who had since married a Chipinga farmer and entered politics as the country's first female legislator. As a sitting member, she was an activist and stalwart of the Responsible Government Party. Her reluctant and somewhat misogynist mentor, Charles Coghlan, was an Irishman born in South Africa, who later became a prominent Bulawayo lawyer. Coghlan arrived in Rhodesia towards the end of the Anglo-Boer War, and would in due course lead the Responsible Government Party to partial independence.

And we could go on, and on. Impoverished aristocrats, wealthy colonials, Jews, Afrikaners, Scotsmen, Englishmen, Frenchmen, women, men and children, by the turn of the century, the white population of the colony was creeping towards 10,000. The railway line was edging north, and within a few years, it would span the Zambezi and race towards the borders of the Congo Free State. The towns of Salisbury, Bulawayo, Umtali, Gwelo and Fort Victoria were linked by rail or road and were developing their individual identities quite as the colony was establishing its own. Administration, be it native or civil, touched almost every quarter, and the law was established, enforced and arbitrated by a police force growing in confidence, and a judiciary growing in reach. As the Jameson era began to slip into history, Southern Rhodesia joined the growing constellation of settled British colonies.

22
The Lying in State
So little done, so much to do – **Cecil John Rhodes**

For Cecil Rhodes, the future seemed to at times be impeded and overwhelmed by men and institutions rooted in the past. The repercussions of the Jameson Raid were long and ponderous, as inquiries, discussions, interviews and investigations roved far beyond the Raid, penetrating every aspect of his life, his work and achievements. While none of it seemed to go anywhere or end anywhere, it sucked the life out of him. He often appeared not to hear, or listen, and sometimes not even to care. At times he had to be shaken from an almost metaphysical reverie to attend to these temporal irritations, and he seemed to do this amid thoughts of his own annihilation. The emotional torrent of the Raid, and its aftermath, and the melodrama of the Matabele Rebellion, but most of all, the soaring magnificence of the Indabas, had all changed him. He took to looking at his country from a mountaintop, finding himself ever more grateful for its consistency and solidity. With his worn copy of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* close at hand, he found soil and stone comforting, and the trees of the veld an anchor against the turbulence of his life. He began to think of Rhodesia as his monument, and the Matopos, the burial place of kings, as his home.

Rhodes might have expected many things as he steamed south from Beira, but while his legacy and reputation were being flogged at the post in London, he could not have guessed how well things had gone for him in the Cape. There, word of his political sorcery in the Matopos had not only impressed the general public, but also most of those who had been appointed by Parliament to judge him. The Committee of Inquiry concluded that he had not been party to, nor in approval of the actual act of the Raid, but guilty of intent, and involved in its conception.

Arriving in Port Elizabeth, he expected the worst, but he was greeted as a hero. Those that met him as such were those who in the past he had derided as 'Jingoists', the flag waving, Boer hating royalists, but he was grateful for them now. His carriage was unhorsed and pulled to the Town Hall by man-power, and he was applauded all the way to Cape Town. Then, not very long afterwards, another heart attack struck, and as he lay in recuperation, Rhodes began to give thought to the monuments of his life.

A year earlier his home, the rustic *Groote Schuur,* built of stone and thatch, burned to the ground. His collections of art and artefacts, and his library and furnishing, all priceless, were lost. From the ashes, he determined to build something of excellence, not as his home, for he did not anticipate much more life, but as the official residence for future prime ministers and presidents of a greater South Africa. The task was entrusted to the Victorian architect Sir Herbert Baker, while Rhodes then turned his attention to that other great unfinished work of his life, his through route from the Cape to Cairo. The railway had by now arrived in Bulawayo, amid fanfare and applause, costing neither the Cape Colony nor England a penny. Now it was poised to edge further north, to extend the influence of the British Empire deep into the interior. Two million pounds was all that was needed to advance the line north as far as Lake Tanganyika, but where once Rhodes only required to ask, this time both Her Majesty and the Board of Directors demurred. Despite this, in 1898 he was re-elected to the board of directors of the British South Africa Company, the same year of the Order in Council was promulgated that recognised Rhodesia as a British colony.

He then plunged into an election in the Cape that seemed to hold no hope. He now stumped for the Progressive Party, the Jingoists of yore, and with the passion of a dying man, he appealed for a union of South African territories, extolling Rhodesia, and begging that she be included in the greater nation now quite clearly entering the pain of birth. He joked that while he was offering the expanse of Rhodesia to the proposed union of South Africa, it was not for any personal gain. South Africa would gain a new province, while he would only get a plot measuring six feet by four.

Rhodes carried his seat, although his party was defeated, but still, this was not the end. In 1899, he returned to England to try once again to raise the money he needed for the Cape to Cairo railway. He failed. Others who advocated the more practical solution of constructing railways inland from East African ports prevailed, and this is the structure of African railways as they are today. Then, his failing heart was enlivened by an honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from Oxford, awarded together with another for Lord Herbert Kitchener, the great English soldier. But Rhodes was feted, and hailed as the ‘Colossus’, showered with praise tributes that Kitchener did not receive. The establishment, was silent, of course, for Rhodes remained an anathema, but the people, the *people*, adored him.

War broke out in South Africa on 11 October 1899, and if he acknowledged blame for at least some part in inciting this war, it did not alter the pace of his last run. The British lost the initiative in the countryside and withdrew under siege to Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith. Rhodes hurried north to Kimberley on the last train to enter the town, and to the disgust of the military commander, he established himself there for the duration of the war. The Boers felt a particular hatred for Rhodes, and his presence in Kimberley ensured that determined efforts would be made to break it. Rhodes, however, could not give a damn, for it seemed that he had reserved his best for this moment.

He assumed command and proceeded to irritate the commanders of the garrison and defenders of the town beyond endurance. He had ridden with his irregulars in Matabeleland and had learned a few things about war. Out of a general distrust of military men, he opposed and contradicted them at every opportunity. Colonel Methuen, en route to relieve the town, wrote: "On my entry into Kimberley, Mr Rhodes must make his immediate departure." In the intervening two months, Rhodes attempted to square the generals Roberts and Kitchener by offering supplies in exchange for authority, but neither would hear it.

At this point, Rhodes was mostly without support. Rhodesians, for such they had begun to call themselves, were present further north at the siege of Mafeking but were not at Rhodes' side in Kimberley. It was a sick and dying Rhodes who passed the remaining two years of his life restlessly moving between the Cape, Rhodesia and England, and his autumn was blighted not only by his own unwillingness to rest but also by that which had always been so noticeably absent throughout his life.

Rhodes enjoyed relationships with women on many levels. His conquests included such literary luminaries as Flora Shaw and Olive Schreiner, while many other Victorian society ladies contrived to own a few Chartered shares so that they might be in his company from time to time. Yet none of these liaisons was ever observed to be intimate. He neither empathised with women, nor seemed to trust them, and there is no convincing evidence that Rhodes ever had a lover from either sex. It is therefore ironic that the closing passages of his life were besmirched by the intrusion of a calculating woman.

Princess Catherine Radziwiłł, a middle-aged dowager of Polish descent, contrived to meet Rhodes on a sea voyage between Southampton

and Cape Town. From then on she aggressively manoeuvred herself into his company, and when he resisted, she began to spread rumours that they were lovers, and then soon to be married. Rhodes was scandalised and at first, could scarcely believe that this was happening. She forged his name to obtain £29,000 and was duly prosecuted and spent sixteen months in a South African prison. But if Rhodes thought that he had pulled her off his skin, he was wrong. She persisted and threatened to sue the Rhodes trustees before committing her memoirs to print in a book about their 'affair'.

Then, one day, he was struck down with a particularly severe attack of asthma. He often suffered in this way, but this time, as his doctors gathered around his bed, they could do nothing to ease his distress. Within a few days, he asked to be removed to a small property he owned in Muizenburg, south of Cape Town. There a wall was demolished to allow in the sea breeze, and he lay slowly starving of oxygen until, on 26 March 1902, he died. It was a slow and anguished death, and in the end, he was given his six by four portion of Africa.

As William Shakespeare once remarked: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interrèd with their bones." This was certainly true for Rhodes, at least in the long term, but in the moment, his death caused Edwardian Britain to pause, and acknowledge the passing of a monumental personality. His funeral procession through Cape Town was honoured by the great and the good on both sides of the floor, and then his remains were carried north by special train to Rhodesia, frequently pausing for respects to be paid. His grave was carved out of the rock of the Matopos, over which a slab was laid with a plain inscription reading: 'Here lie the remains of Cecil John Rhodes.' His interment ceremony was brief and economical, and after the handful of dignitaries who attended had departed, an amaNdebele guard of honour was posted beside the grave, and there it remained for several years.

23
An Industry is Born

Farm for sale in Marandellas, or would exchange for a bicycle capable of taking the owner to Cape Town – **Newspaper advertisement,** *Rhodesia Herald*

While Rhodes was alive, he was the moral authority that governed and guided Rhodesia. It was he who ordered the full width of Bulawayo's streets and the planting of the trees that shaded them. For his farmers, he imported fresh bloodlines of chickens, cattle, sheep and goats. He introduced new strains and cultivars of fruit for future orchards. He decided who went where, who received what and who partnered whom. Out of enterprises that succeeded he took a cut, and towards those that failed he contributed his share. He engineered the character of the early white population of the colony and managed their projects. His dream was practical, and as such, it gave rise to a practical people in a land of practical achievement. Rhodes was Rhodesia, and Rhodesia was Rhodes. His people were created in his own image, and so it remained for as long as he lived.

When he died, however, the character of the colony changed. Both the settlers and the British South Africa Board of Directors were abruptly forced to shake themselves awake, and confront the truth of what Rhodes had left behind. His moral legacy was enormous, and his colony a monument, but it was all vested in the Chartered Company, and the Company was bankrupt. It was no longer possible to shelter behind the reputation of Cecil John Rhodes, and both the Company and the settlers now had to find a way to make it pay.

A solution, however, was not quite so easy to find. The Directors were understandably estranged from the facts on the ground, and as a clique of financiers, aristocrats and businessmen, they certainly had very little to offer a dwindling settler community disgusted with the lack of opportunity. The period was the first decade of the 20th century, and the administration itself remained the principal economic base of the colony. Thanks to William Milton, the administration, police and judiciary were efficiently organised and well resourced, but there was fundamentally nothing for the Company to administer but itself. Then came the railway, yet another subsidised industry bleeding resources from an already anaemic Company.

The railway was a superb infrastructural asset, of course, having been both well and cheaply built. Its purpose in the first instance was to stamp the fact of white occupation on the landscape, and thereafter to support a nascent mining industry. The original Mafeking to Bulawayo line was soon afterwards pushed through to Salisbury and in due course east to Beira. When the anticipated gold boom did not materialise, however, the colony found itself with an outstanding facility, but nothing much to do with it. During his period as acting administrator, it was Albert Grey who asked himself, and others, how the railway line, and the colony as a whole, could be made to pay.

It so happened that Lord Grey was a cigar smoker, and sometime during the Mashona Rebellion, he was given some home-cured shag and a few hand-rolled cigars produced on the Mashonaland farm of a certain C.E Howell. Grey tried some of the shag himself and distributed the rest among local soldiers to sample. Later he commented to Howell that the pipe tobacco had proved too strong for the white troops, and the cigars were abysmal. A handful were nonetheless distributed in the Salisbury Club, and the response, to Lord Grey's surprise, was rather positive. In fact, it provoked a discussion, which quickly became somewhat more general than just tobacco.

Until then, agriculture was seen only as a means of providing food while landowners and their armies of labour searched for gold, and, of course, to keep the urban settlements supplied with meat and produce. It certainly offered no potential for an industry, and there were very few men attempting to develop it along those lines. Lord Grey, however, was convinced that he had stumbled onto something. From his first draught of Howell's primitive leaf, the idea of commercial tobacco cultivation lingered in his mind. To him, it seemed that the railway line was more ideally placed to service an agricultural industry than the defunct legacy of mining. It also happened that the railway line followed the path of the central watershed, which was not only the area of greatest agricultural potential but also that part of the country most attractive to European settlement. And there was another point too that Lord Grey argued, not only in the Salisbury Club but also to the Board of Directors, of which he was one. Agriculture as an organized industry would tend to attract settlers who actually wanted to settle, rather than those transitory fortune seekers of the 'Uitlander' type, who could be here today and gone tomorrow. The timing was also

opportune, for, in the aftermath of the rebellions, the country was swimming with broken diggers and prospectors who would soon pack up and leave unless something better was offered.

Although not a pioneer of any sort himself, Lord Grey diligently worked the idea on any farmer who showed the slightest interest and the first to do so was a young and dynamic Mashonaland agriculturalist by the name of George Oldum. As with a majority of Mashonaland landowners, Oldum was a maize producer, and like the others, he was frustrated with the limitations of a locally consumed food crop. After dining one evening at the Salisbury Club with Lord Grey, he undertook a little research into the question of tobacco, and he was in the first instance struck by the scale of obstacles standing in the way.

Tobacco, for example, required a market, and although a sizable market did exist in South Africa, it was dominated by American imports, as, in fact, was the entire world market. Besides this, Oldum had no means other than practical testing to establish the growing potential of Mashonaland, and no particular resource to experiment. He concluded that tobacco was not the quick-fix that the colony needed, but it nonetheless had potential.

Oldum then travelled to the United States, where he spent a year learning what he could about tobacco production. His first discovery was that global trends were shifting away from pipe and cigar tobaccos towards the Virginia type used in the manufacture of cigarettes. His second finding was that the sandy soil of the central watershed region of Rhodesia, as in Virginia itself, was in theory ideal for the production of Virginia leaf. By the middle of 1903, he was back in Rhodesia, and samples of soil from his farm were sent across the Atlantic for analysis, and from that, a general exchange of information began with various American growers.

Soon afterwards, Albert Grey left the colony to take up his appointment as Governor of Canada, leaving Oldum to begin his experimentation in earnest. A viable tobacco industry in Rhodesia would take time to develop, and Grey’s enthusiasm was undoubtedly a little ahead of its time, and the Board of Directors proved singularly willing to tear itself away from the hope and expectation of gold. By then the Company had dropped its early demand for a half share of every mine in Rhodesia, which helped to make the business more viable for the small operator, but it

did nothing to answer the question of how administrative costs were to be recouped, and money earned.

In the meanwhile, those early experiments in the field of tobacco, and the excited conversation among one or two farmers created a minor stir that in due course did reach the ears of the Board of Directors, and it began to consider the vast resource of land in the colony as a potential revenue earner. Under the terms of the Lippert Concession, the Company was reasonably secure in claiming sole rights of land distribution, and in truth, this was a fair legal point. The sale of land, in combination with the excellent rail transport system, now suddenly seemed the most likely means of turning a quick profit.

Oldum, in the meanwhile, teamed up with a certain Henry South, and the two began to experiment in tandem with flue-cured leaf on South's Warwickshire Farm. The results were mixed, but nonetheless encouraging, and historically significant because this was the first case of yellow Virginia leaf flue-cured anywhere outside its home belt in the southeast United States. In due course, the administration was directed by the Board to invest a modest sum in assisting the development of a tobacco industry, primarily with a view to increasing the value of the land. Seed was made available to growers, and trials began at an experimental centre founded just outside Salisbury. Many friendly exchanges of advice, information and technical support were offered from the United States, and this certainly added powerful impetus to a fledgeling industry. In 1905, about 500,000-pound weight of tobacco of different types was produced in Rhodesia and exhibited as far afield as Cape Town. Viability had now been demonstrated, so all that remained was for the pioneers of the industry to establish reliable markets.

Traditional producers naturally tended to maintain the loyalty of their regular buyers, and in the beginning, Rhodesian growers satisfied themselves with burgeoning local demand. Cigarettes were hand rolled by small manufacturers working in farm outbuildings. For this, skilled workers were recruited from as far afield as Greece, Turkey and even Russia. These homegrown brands were well received and bore such names as Warwickshire Farm's 'Sublime Brand' and 'Lachie Black's Stapleford Specials'. The latter sold at 3*s* 6*d* for 100 and were described as 'Best Tobacco' for the Englishman, 'Boer Tobacco' of intermediate quality, and

‘Kaffir Tobacco’ that was usually the floor sweepings reserved for the blacks.

Despite all of this, by 1910, tobacco still made up no more than one per cent of total exports, but the 1905 founding of the Rhodesian Agricultural Union certainly helped to buttress the foundations. At its first annual general meeting, the Union recognised the potential of tobacco by recommending the construction of a central tobacco warehouse. This, in turn, had the effect of stimulating greater interest from South Africa in bulk purchasing, while even the British Admiralty began making enquiries into the supply of Rhodesian tobacco for the Royal Navy. Prices of Rhodesian leaf, however, remained significantly higher than American, and only the willingness of South Africa to purchase supplementary supplies allowed the Rhodesian industry to sustain its first years of growth.

Then, in 1905, the industry received an unexpected boost when its Nyasaland counterpart was pitched into disarray by a South African decision to impose duties on agricultural imports from the lakes region, based on the development of preferential trade zones and various customs unions, which did not immediately affect Southern Rhodesia. Not only was Rhodesian tobacco now more competitive in the regional market, but an exodus of experienced farmers from Nyasaland arrived in Rhodesia soon afterwards, bringing with them a trained body of native labour, which incidentally began a tradition of migrant agricultural labour from the lakes to Southern Rhodesia.

In 1910, the first auction sale of flue-cured tobacco was held in Rhodesia, where 120,000-pound weight of leaf was sold at an average price of 1s 2d per pound. Only three buyers were present, however, and prices were still high compared to the United States. A quarrel between American and British tobacco interests caused the British to briefly accept these uneconomic rates, which in turn tempted Rhodesian growers to ignore otherwise instructive global market trends. As a consequence, 1914 saw an inevitable collapse in prices and the withdrawal of most of the annual crop. The Rhodesian tobacco industry then slumped for a period, with bitter lessons learned by all.

24
The Dream of Union
Rhodesia for Rhodesians…and the Empire!

The rise of agriculture in Rhodesia brought in its wake another contest of wills between the settlers and the Company. The specific irritant on this occasion was the Company's assumption that all unalienated land in the colony was its own to utilise or to distribute as it chose. This position was vigorously opposed by the elected members, who argued that land was an asset of the colony, not the Company, all of which added grist to a mill that had been steadily grinding out discontent in the colony since 1890.

While it is true that settler frustration seemed to encompass just about everything, it was above all rooted in the fact that a commercial company was seen as an inappropriate system of government for a settled colony. By then it had become evident to all, including both the Imperial Government and the Company itself, that some alternative form of administration was inevitable. Rhodes had briefly dressed the wound, but now he was dead, and his dictatorship had developed into government by committee.

Central to Rhodes' dream, however, had always been the notion of a greater South Africa, and just how great this would be would only be limited by the breadth of vision of his heirs. In 1910, South Africa achieved political union, but nothing so far seemed to suggest that the settler community of Rhodesia had any interest in joining it. This on reflection seems quite strange, because union with South Africa, bearing in mind the landlocked nature of Rhodesia, and its relative size, was entirely intuitive. If nothing else, the chances of long-term white domination of southern Africa would have almost been guaranteed. A greater South Africa would eventually have drawn in Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Bechuanaland, and perhaps even German South West Africa. Indeed, a 'United States of Africa' under the Union Jack, stretching as far north as the equator, would not then have been beyond the realms of possibility.

There were, of course, other points to consider, and it was Jameson, in a speech delivered to the Salisbury Club shortly before his death, who hinted at some of the risks that union with South Africa might pose for Rhodesia.

“What is going to happen to this young, vigorous child when it gets into the bed of that large and corpulent mother.” He asked. “The Union of South Africa? What always happens? In this case, at all events, all your aspirations are going to be killed, and at the inquest the next morning the verdict will be ‘Overlaid by the Union!’”

This, of course, was merely a case of isolationism, but it was fundamental to British colonial thinking at the time. Although politically united as a British dominion, the Union of South Africa remained socially divided, with racial acrimony between Briton and Boer not noticeably diminished. Despite magnanimity in victory, British contempt for the Afrikaner community remained palpable, and vice versa. Two visionary Afrikaners, General Louis Botha and his deputy General Jan Smuts, governed the Union, and in practical terms, the country had been returned to its white population almost without condition. South Africa, however, was now a British dominion, and it was this somewhat theoretical fact that remained the open sore on the body of the Afrikaner nation.

White Rhodesia, as a consequence, tended to resist the prospect of entering into such an uncomfortable political compromise, and certainly, there was no interest in hordes of impoverished Boer flooding into the colony in a search for cheap land. Another factor was labour. Removing the border between Rhodesia and South Africa would encourage local black labour to move south to exploit the better wage conditions of the Witwatersrand, and white Rhodesia wished to keep its labour reserves precisely where they were.

An alternative idea was an amalgamation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, both British South Africa Company territories, which would offer a viable political and economic counterbalance to the economic and political weight of the Union of South Africa. Failing this, it would be a simple choice between direct rule from Whitehall or rule by the Company. Since the twenty-five-year term of the Royal Charter was due to expire in October 1914, time for all to decide was fast running out.

Realizing, indeed, that time was slipping away, the Company steadfastly held to the view that its primary assets were the railway system, the mineral rights and the forty-million or so acres of land that remained unclaimed or unoccupied. Naturally, the settler community saw things differently. There was no dispute yet regarding the railway system, and the question of mineral rights would continue to fester for some time to come,

but when it came to land, a majority of settlers were emphatic. The land belonged to the colony and was, therefore, a national asset. The Company did not have the right to dispose of such a vital, strategic asset as a private transaction.

In this regard, the Company had its back against the wall. It was legally empowered according to the Lippert Concession to dispose of the land, but there were multiple avenues of legal opposition that were equally compelling. If, however, the Company was forced to concede, it would find itself in an extremely difficult position. As of 1904, it carried a deficit of £8 million, a colossal amount of money. Out of its purse had come the railway, the telegraph and all public buildings and institutions across the territory. Added to this was the financial input related to maintaining a police force, a civil service and the governing institutions of a relatively modern country. The rebellions alone had prejudiced the Company treasury to the tune of more than £2.5 million. In the depressed climate following the Anglo-Boer War, the Company found itself unable to raise further loans on its own credit, so the commercial venture of Rhodesia was effectively bankrupt, and it goes without saying that the shareholders had yet to see a penny returned on their investment.

It must be added, however, that despite all of this, the settler community was not without gratitude to the Company, and nor was it universally in opposition. A great many settlers were scathing and unrealistically hostile, but many others took a more reasonable and sympathetic view. Farmers, railwaymen and miners usually voiced the loudest criticism, while the imperial men of the middle and upper classes were inclined to be less judgemental. Many, in fact, found no fault with the Company at all, and leading this cohort was the Argus press, now firmly behind the Company. The editor of the *Rhodesia Herald*, a certain C.D Don, spoke for these in an editorial published on the eve of World War I. “Whatever the shortcomings of our local administration, whatever the anomalies of our form of government, whatever the mistakes made by the British South Africa Company, the fact remains that the resources and credit of the Charter, plus the pluck and grit of the settlers themselves, have made possible the Rhodesia of today.”

While this might have been true, and reflective of the views of the professional and administrative types, it still offered no solutions. It was Don again who pointed out some of the options available to the settlers:

“The position may be summed up in a brace of alternatives. Either we continue under the Charter, with legislative control, including control of land policy, but without financial responsibility, until such time as we are strong enough to go to the Imperial Government with the request for responsible institutions; or we endeavour to thrust the Charter on one side and take our chance of what may replace it as the governing factor in Rhodesia.”

The Board of Directors then turned to eminent London financier Sir George Goldie, to suggest a way out of the impasse. Goldie was no fool, and neither was he without considerable relevant experience. He was to the Niger region of West Africa what Rhodes had been to Rhodesia. He was able to claim credit for the founding of the Royal Niger Company and the subsequent birth of Nigeria as a collection of protectorates. His work in that region, however, typified precisely the state of affairs that did not exist in Rhodesia. Neither Nigeria, nor the Gold Coast, or Sierra Leone for that matter, ever really hosted viable white, settler populations, and as a consequence, no demands were ever made for a home-based colonial civil administration. It might be assumed, therefore, that Goldie did not fully understand the nuances of the situation in Rhodesia. Nonetheless, he examined the circumstances of the Company in great detail and announced his findings in a letter to the elected members of the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Council.

In this letter, he reviewed the various calamities that had beset the colony in its brief life. Among these were the rinderpest and other cattle diseases, the native rebellions, the Boer War and the consequent economic depression. All of these could be considered acts of God, but all had contributed to the drain on the Company’s treasury. He then proposed that the people of Southern Rhodesia accept the accumulated deficits as a funded debt of the country, and if this were agreed to, then the Company would undertake to raise a loan of £3 million to be spent on developing agriculture, industry and immigration. Tom Shillington, director of the *Rhodesia Herald*, responded for the settler majority when he declared:

“The (Goldie) financial proposals show evidence of being launched as a means of tiding over the B.S.A. Company, and not as a serious endeavour to aid Rhodesia. They are first of all to keep going a corporation that is inherently unsound. It seems the height of imprudence to propose that if the loan is raised on a funding debt, the Colonists are not to have the

administration of it. There is no evidence in the history of the British South Africa Company to justify the belief that such monies would be expended in the direction indicated – they would doubtless be devoted as heretofore to the maintenance of an extravagant Administration."

Although public opinion on the subject was not by any means unanimous, Shillington's view was widely supported, and it left the Company in no doubt that the Goldie Report had been rejected. A national conference was then held in Salisbury, but little was achieved. In a letter read on his behalf, Jameson, who was then Prime Minister of the Cape Colony as well as a senior director of the Company, proposed that a settler deputation be assembled to confer directly with the Board of Directors. The subsequent conference lasted two days, but since most settlers present attended as individuals, no agreement could be reached except that a problem existed. However, the following resolution was tabled:

"This conference records its conviction that Southern Rhodesia can make no true progress as long as the British South Africa Company, as an administrative or commercial body, has control of public affairs, and instructs its delegates to strive for the elimination of the Company as an administrative or commercial body in Southern Rhodesia. Should such delegates find it impossible, with the assistance of the Imperial Government, to bring this about it will be open to them to bring for consideration of Southern Rhodesia any other proposals."

Five delegates from the conference were then selected to meet the directors, but this achieved nothing either. The Company refused to consider complete withdrawal from the territory, and the settlers rejected a counter-proposal that they could assume financial authority only if the Company retained political control. The only concession by the board was the withdrawal of one nominated member to give the elected members a majority of one. Limitations placed on financial decisions, however, served to render this meaningless too. The *Rhodesia Herald* effectively summed up the mood of the settler population in its leader column on 13th Sept 1904: "Such preposterous proposals were never before offered for the acceptance of an enlightened and business-like people, and it is gratifying to learn that they have been practically flung back into the faces of those who devised them."

In the meanwhile, the only positive result of all of this was that the Company administration reviewed its own procedures and made some

effort to become more accessible. However, there remained no solution to its financial woes, and it continued to struggle to make ends meet. For the settlers, on the other hand, the door was not completely bolted. Provision remained for the Legislative Assembly to petition for Responsible Government at such time as it achieved an absolute majority, and was able to present some evidence of its financial fitness. However, no agreement was reached regarding the two vital questions of ownership of the land and the question of responsibility for the Company's past administrative deficits.

The more divisive of these two issues – the question of unalienated land – was put to a British Parliamentary Select Committee for consideration, but the decision when finally it was handed down was cautious, to say the least. The Imperial Government took the view that whatever opinion it chose to express could never be legally binding and that the issue could ultimately only be decided by a court of law. The following year the same question was asked, and again the Imperial Government dodged it. In 1905, the Legislative Council, with the support of the Company, passed an ordinance allowing it to contract its own public debt, but this was vetoed by the Colonial Office for so long as the Company remained the owners of all the country's assets, and responsible for its administration.

And so the colony's political stalemate continued. In 1913, a settler majority of twelve members to six was agreed, but in practice, this meant very little, only because an Order in Council of 1911 restricted any elected members from passing any economic proposals, or indeed any ordinances interfering with the land and other rights of the Company. As Ethel Tawse Jollie remarked, "it merely carried off some of the smoke without quenching the fire."

In 1908 a delegation led by prominent Bulawayo lawyer and Responsible Government activist Charles Coghlan, and including the Administrator William Milton, now Sir William Milton, attended a National Convention held in Durban to discuss Rhodesian unification with South Africa. At the conclusion of the conference, they returned home with little enthusiasm for union with South Africa. While not precluding the possibility in the future, it was agreed that union was not a practical consideration at that moment. In 1914, with the prospect of a major global war pending, all parties agreed to a ten-year supplementary charter that

would push forward the date of a final decision to 1924. Sir William Milton retired as Company Administrator and was succeeded by Sir Drummond Chaplin.

Many hoped that a change in administrative leadership would help shift what was by then a hopeless deadlock. Like Milton, Chaplin was a contemporary and friend of both Jameson and Rhodes, although he was the better placed in the social hierarchy and more astute in the field of public relations. Educated at Harrow and Oxford, he maintained the tradition of the 'honourable and military' but deviated somewhat by his initial choice of journalism as a career. He managed the Consolidated Goldfields of South Africa, and it was there that he first came into contact with Rhodes. Later he served as the President of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, before joining the Chartered Company in 1914. While Milton had been a somewhat reluctant recruit to the Company, Drummond Chaplin accepted his commission with enthusiasm, and once in office, resolved to clear up some of the bad blood between the administration and the settlers.

However, despite being a staunch imperialist, Drummond Chaplin was as irreconciled to the notion of Responsible Government as he was to union with South Africa. Like most members of the British establishment, he regarded the Boer as his natural enemy and found himself supporting the idea of an amalgamation of the two Rhodesias as a counterpoise to the increasing power of South Africa and the steady rise of Afrikaner nationalism. He therefore strongly backed Doctor Jameson and other members of the board when, in December 1915, the idea of the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Rhodesia began for the first time to be seriously mooted.

For the Company, the advantages of amalgamation were in part economic and in part political. A merger would halve administrative costs and settle the question of the viability of two struggling colonies. It would also positively affect the balance of power in the region, should South Africa become a republic under Afrikaner rule. A greater Rhodesia might even in time involve the East African colonies, thereby ensuring a brighter political future for all the British territories in the region. Notwithstanding the probable economic and political benefits of the scheme, the fly in the ointment remained the parochialism and narrow vision of the two settler communities themselves.

Northern Rhodesia, with its handful of white settlers, feared that it would become a province of Southern Rhodesia. The settler community of Southern Rhodesia, on the other hand, held that amalgamation would abruptly increase the ratio of black to white from its current 27:1 to 60:1. This would make it even less likely that the Imperial Government would agree to Southern Rhodesian self-government at some time in the future. The *Rhodesia Herald* leader column of 12 April 1917 gave an indication of the newspaper's, and thus the Company's support for amalgamation, reading:

"Sir Charles's [Coghlan] alarm is based on the belief that if the franchise laws of Southern Rhodesia are extended to the North, the result will be that the native voters there will swamp the local European electorate and the Legislative Council at Salisbury. To us the argument presents a strong reason for taking advantage of the amalgamation scheme to ensure an early revision of our franchise laws. For if the danger is as great as Sir Charles Coghlan professes to believe, how many years will it be before the natives of Southern Rhodesia produce a sufficient number of educated adults to dominate or swamp the white electorate? We have yet to learn that the native education in Northern Rhodesia is vastly more advanced than it is in the South."

Although the Legislative Council approved, in theory, the idea of amalgamation, the elected members voted against it eight to four, and judging the mood of the settlers accordingly, the Company let the matter drop. And thus the situation remained as the population of both Rhodesias, in common with South Africa, and indeed the entire world prepared itself for war.

25
World War I

We have chucked the tools and ledgers, we have left the bench and mine, we are sailing east to Flanders to join the khaki line – **Oh Canada!**

World War I was the first critical test of the modern British Empire and the call to arms did not go unanswered. Individual dominion governments did not immediately come on board, but expatriates of British stock the world over embarked on ships for England. In Rhodesia, it was no different. The press and the administration observed this rush to arms, and a note of caution was sounded, urging all to remember the last time the manpower of the colony decamped en-masse. There was also, of course, as far as the Company was concerned, the question of who would pay for it.

The settler community, of course, would have none of it. Rhodesia to date had attracted precisely the men of Rhodes' original conception, and the tempo of patriotism in Rhodesia was quick indeed. The Rhodesian military contribution to WWI is usually measured alongside South Africa, but of the South African contingent of 136,000, at least 5,500 white and 2,700 black were recruited in Rhodesia. This, however, does not count the numbers who made their way independently to England or were redirected from other theatres. The entire white population of Southern Rhodesia was at that time no more than 24,000, so the Rhodesian contribution was the highest per capita of all the overseas colonies.

It is not our intention here to plunge too deeply into Rhodesian military history during WWI since that is covered adequately elsewhere, but certain signs in these early responses are nonetheless worth commenting on. The Australians had mixed feelings about the British, and probably more than half of South African men at arms despised them. The Canadians had their French language population to consider, but white Rhodesia was English to the core. As far as immigration was concerned, the colony was highly discouraging of Dutch speakers from the south, and very selective even of those Englishmen who were granted entry. There was no question that Rhodesia would willingly evacuate its borders for the sake of empire defence because the colony considered itself integral to England, and indeed it was. Besides that, a residue of Cecil Rhodes' lofty Victorian

attitudes on race and manifest destiny still sat well in pockets throughout the colony.

Another point, somewhat allied to this, is that of those 5,500 whites, over 1,700 held commissions, and the majority of others were senior NCOs. This would be noticed again in World War II and was explained by the fact that white Rhodesian youth tended to be of a higher calibre than most others of the empire. Rhodesia indeed tended to be more welcoming of a 'certain class' of Englishman, which might perhaps have contributed, combined with the fact that managing large labour forces helped develop the confidence of command at an early age. The answer, however, must remain a matter of opinion entirely, and all that can be said for sure is that white Rhodesian youth approached the war with a maximum of bravado and a minimum of reflection.

The main Rhodesian military contribution to the Allied victory tended to be in localised African campaigns, and primarily in combination with South African forces. Apart from those that set off for England to enlist directly in the British Army, the 'Southern Rhodesian Volunteers' organised themselves into two divisions, which were to be mobilised in the event of a general native uprising. Besides this, the opening months of the war saw Rhodesians posted on the Caprivi Strip in case the Germans attempted an invasion. Nothing of the sort happened, of course, and general disgust at such operational inertia saw many more Rhodesians set sail independently for England.

Things started to warm up, however, as South Africa lumbered into the war. South Africa, in fact, found itself at a painful crossroads when the war in Europe broke out. A little over a decade earlier, Briton and Boer had been at one another's throats, and the Boer defeat came only at a terrible cost. There was, as a consequence, no particular love among the impoverished and dispossessed Boer for the British, and it was they who mainly drifted into service with the Union Defence Force. General Jan Smuts, Minister of Defence, was grievously challenged by a mutiny as a large force of South African troops attempted to cross the Orange River and declare for Germany. This was a bruising and ugly encounter, and only after it was suppressed could South Africa begin to contemplate its more significant role in the conflict.

That role was to annex German South West Africa to Britain. Britain had neither the organisation or manpower to achieve this so early in the

war, so South Africa was asked to do the job upon its own resources, to which it agreed. White troops from across the region were called in, and although the Rhodesians arrived in theatre rather too late to assist in the mutiny, they were not too late to join the South African expeditionary force gathering to take on the Germans in South West Africa.

Under the command of General Louis Botha, but organised in its every detail by General Jan Smuts, the German South West Africa Campaign was a masterpiece of planning and preparation, to the extent that a shooting war was mostly unnecessary. The 1st Battalion of the Southern Rhodesia Regiment, a somewhat last minute creation, joined the various Union Defence Force contingents in Cape Town and set off for Walvis Bay on Christmas Day 1914. After that, a great deal of desert football, writing letters and smoking pipes followed as the Rhodesians found themselves at the rear, and for the most part on garrison duty.

The campaign itself is historically significant because it was the first major episode of mechanised desert warfare on record, and as such, it introduced tactics and methods that would remain in use through WWII, and beyond. In simple terms, the operation was divided into two zones of command, with General Botha landing at Walvis Bay, and concentrating one column northwards, while Smuts landed in Luderitz and directed his assault to the south. With a South African strength of 45,000 troops, the much smaller German garrison was surprised and quickly overwhelmed. Thereafter, the campaign settled into an exercise in military engineering, as railway lines were laid and wells dug to service a vast force of men, horses, livestock and retainers. A few actions were fought – the Rhodesians fought briefly at Trekkopjies – but on the whole, the Germans ran a wild goose chase until they could do so no longer, and then they simply surrendered. It must be said that they did not defend the colony with much commitment, believing that victory would ultimately be secured in Europe, after which their colonies would be returned, along with everyone else's.

The 1st Southern Rhodesia Regiment was pulled out of the territory early in July 1915, immediately after the surrender of Windhoek. Frustration within the regiment ran high, and quite a few men stepped off their troop ships in Cape Town and immediately boarded the next ship bound for England. Others made their way home, and for a few weeks afterwards, the clubs and hotel bars of the colony rang with bitter complaints against Smuts and Botha. Calls were made for the only battalion

of the Rhodesia Regiment to be disbanded so that men might be released to make their own way to the front line.

However, if a good fight was what they were looking for, they would soon get it. The German South West Africa Campaign, by the standard of the times, was rather a cakewalk, but on the other side of the continent, the Germans were far better prepared. While the South West Africa Campaign was underway, and regional Allied forces were distracted, the German garrison in East Africa tended to have things all its own way. Although a small British colonial defence force, boosted by a detachment of the King's African Rifles and a handful of Imperial troops, garrisoned the frontier between German and British East Africa, it was touch and go. By mid-1915, the Allies were in practical occupation of the German East African coast, and most of the key ports, but that was not by any means the end of it. When the situation on the coast became untenable, the German garrison simply retreated to the Kilimanjaro region, and from there began guerrilla operations into British territory.

Command of the operation to deal with this was given to General Jan Smuts, who assembled a British and Commonwealth expeditionary force comprising detachments and units from across the British Empire. Mainly, however, it was white South African and Rhodesian troops, supported by a large Indian contingent, and utilising tens of thousands of black porters and labourers recruited mainly from Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. The German garrison was comparatively minute, with some 20,000 native troops commanded by 2,000 German officers, under the overall command of a gifted German Colonel by the name of Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck.

The German East Africa Campaign began in February 1916, after which it became something of a private contest between Smuts and von Lettow-Vorbeck. The German tactic was not to win, but simply to tie down a massive Allied force diverted from the central theatre of action, the Western Front. Von Lettow-Vorbeck, therefore, led Smuts on a merry race across the vast interior of German East Africa, always one step ahead, and undefeated until after the Armistice.

Rhodesian troops entered as the 2nd Battalion of the Rhodesia Regiment, and this was indeed a different experience to the tedium of the South West Africa Campaign. Smuts planned a series of envelopments in the region of Kilimanjaro and the German-British frontier, but each time,

von Lettow-Vorbeck was able to slip the noose, and the chase continued. At the end of a long and challenging supply line, and forced to drive his troops relentlessly, Smuts' campaign became as much a war against climate and conditions than any tangible enemy. Fleeting actions occurred here and there, but in the teeth of the annual monsoon, men began succumbing to dysentery, malaria and blackwater fever at a manifestly unsustainable rate.

By the end of 1916, the scene of action had shifted to the south of what would today be Tanzania, crossing periodically into Portuguese East Africa. By then, certain details had been taken note of, for example, that Indian and black troops appeared to cope better under such malodorous and feverish condition, and as a consequence white troops were increasingly pulled back to be replaced by indigenous African detachments drawn from the various British territories. The 2nd Rhodesia Regiment was by then so diminished that it could barely function as a full battalion. About 150 fresh recruits were required every month to replace losses, and the small white population of Southern Rhodesia was simply unable to sustain this. In January 1917, the decimated battalion was removed from the order of battle and returned to Salisbury, arriving home on 14 April. On 12 October the battalion was formally disbanded, having lost a total of 783 killed and many more wounded or debilitated by disease. Two Victoria Crosses and 400 other decorations for conspicuous gallantry were awarded to Rhodesian troops.

Among the dead was the veteran scout, hunter and explorer Frederick Courtney Selous, one of the seminal figures in early Rhodesian history. He was shot in the head by a sniper at a place called Beho-Beho in Tanganyika while serving with the 25th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. He died on 4 January 1917 at the age of 65. Although he did not serve with the Rhodesia Regiment, Selous' death was a sad epilogue to the Rhodesian involvement in the East Africa Campaign. He carried with him to a lonely grave a Distinguished Service Order, and perhaps the most poignant collection of sights, sounds and memories that any white man of Africa could claim.

In the meanwhile, although Von Lettow-Vorbeck's army had also withered to a remnant, it continued to fight. By the end of 1917, the Campaign had become one of black troops chasing black troops, with both commanded by a small white officer corps. This was a strategy of absolute necessity and was not by any means popular in the colonies. The underlying

reason for this was a deeply held belief that black soldiers should not be given the opportunity to face in battle and kill white men of any race. To do so would serve only to undermine the inviolability of white superiority upon which European survival in Africa depended, and it would set as a consequence a dangerous precedent.

Black drivers and scouts were often recruited into the 2nd Battalion, but frontline soldiers were always white. In mid-1916, however, the decision was made to raise a specific and separate native regiment for combat deployment in East Africa. The original idea had been to recruit exclusively among the amaNdebele, on the assumption that they had a more natural inclination towards war. Soon, however, recruitment was extended to include the maShona and other smaller native groups, and when a second battalion of the Rhodesia Native Regiment was raised, recruiters made a point of trying to attract natives from north of the Zambezi, in particular from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The first 500 were put through two months of basic training before deployment directly to German East Africa, armed with pioneer-era Martini-Henri carbines. Later these were replaced by newer bolt-action Lee Metford rifles, but if anybody cherished the hope that the first black Rhodesian soldiers would distinguish themselves on the field of battle, they were to be disappointed. Indiscipline was rampant, desertions common and the looting of bodies and local villages endemic. One or two white commanders responded to this with dismay, but the memoirs and chronicles of a majority of others suggest a different attitude. This was the first experiment in the use of indigenous troops, and in the absence of tradition, and with generally low standards of training, not much more could really be expected. What was noticeable, however, was that black troops did indeed survive battlefield conditions far better than their white compatriots, which counted for a great deal. Most observers tended to agree that the concept of a native battalion in Rhodesia was there to stay. In the end, three medals were awarded to the Rhodesia Native Regiment, including one Distinguished Conduct Medal, and a total of thirty-one were killed with 116 wounded.

A great many Rhodesians, in the meanwhile, opted for service on the Western Front, and for the most part, they served with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. Indeed, so many Rhodesians found their way into these two battalions that a specific Rhodesian platoon

was sectioned off. However, heavy casualties and ongoing attrition decimated this unit, just as the Rhodesia Regiment had been in East Africa, and it only maintained its existence because of eager recruits arriving regularly from home. So popular was the call to serve that a single Rhodesia platoon was soon increased to two. In July of 1916, the Rhodesian detachments took part in the ‘Big Push’, and saw action in the Battle of the Somme, where heavy losses were recorded. During the attack on Wood Lane, seventeen Rhodesians were lost, while in a follow-up attack, when the platoon’s strength was down to only about seventeen or eighteen men, two were killed and eleven wounded.

26
Responsible Government

We can never govern from Downing Street any part of Africa in which the whites are strong enough to defend themselves – **Michael Hicks Beach**

World War One in Africa left behind many legacies. General Jan Smuts, for example, who was an Afrikaner and a South African first, and a British subject second, believed that since South Africa had conquered German South West and East Africa, both were owed to it. Tanganyika he would not get, but South West Africa he would, which would almost double the size of the South African Union. Thereafter, he would cast his eye north to Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and picture them too as part of the Union of South Africa. The critical point here is that he and Louis Botha were holding power in the Union by the skins of their teeth as a powerful and belligerent Afrikaner nationalist movement waited to snatch it from them. A large and fanatically loyal bloc of pro-British voters, as the Rhodesias indeed were, would help shore up this precarious grip on power

A British African Federation was an idea whose time had come, for the British red stain now covered most of Africa, and Rhodes' dream of a through route from the Cape to Cairo was, at last, a reality. South Africa, Bechuanaland, the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Egypt were all British. The time and place for a complete amalgamation of British African territories, therefore, was surely then and there. Conversely, however, the War struck the British Empire with a bout of the jitters. The German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires had fallen, and the British and French were holding on by their fingernails. Was this really the time to be thinking about a grand amalgamation?

General Jan Smuts certainly thought so, and if Africa north of the equator was a little ambitious, then at least seducing Northern and Southern Rhodesia into the Union of South Africa was feasible. As the dust of war settled, and as Southern Rhodesian servicemen began to make their way home, the conversation in the colony returned naturally and quickly to the question of governance. From this conversation, three clear options emerged. The first, of course, was union with South Africa, the second

amalgamation with Northern Rhodesia and the third Responsible Government.

In the British imperial context, what precisely did Responsible Government mean? Quite simply it meant a locally elected legislature, a local judiciary and a local civil service, all answerable to a local premier and cabinet. Imperial superintendentship in a situation like this was typically exercised by a governor empowered to submit any local legislation to the Colonial Office for approval. In the specific case of Southern Rhodesia, all authority over native affairs, and native legislation would be reserved to the Crown. This, of course, was in respect of events of the Jameson era, which tended to prove that a local settler government could not be trusted to deal fairly and equitably with the natives.

Before the war, the question of land ownership had been submitted for the consideration of a Privy Council, and the judgement was shortly due. This issue was pivotal to both the Company and the settlers, for it would decide whether the land was an asset of the colony or the Company, and this, of course, would in turn answer the Company's question of how it's administrative deficits would be recovered. In the end, the question was not answered at all, for the Imperial Government simply claimed the land itself. In effect, the Imperial claim was to acknowledge that the land belonged to the Africans and that neither the Company nor the settlers could be trusted to dispose of it fairly. The Company was acknowledged only to have conquered and maintained the territory on behalf of the Crown. A codicil, however, granted leave to the Company to claim against the Crown for its accumulated administrative deficit.

On balance, the losers in this arrangement were the settlers. An Imperial Government claim would settle the colony's debt to the Company, at least in part, leaving the Company with its existing land rights, which were huge, the combined railway system and the mineral rights for both Rhodesias. The railway had been paid for and built by the Company, and full mineral rights came with the Rudd Concession. The Company then, after due consideration, adopted a pro-Smuts, pro-South Africa position, openly favouring union as a solution to the constitutional crisis.

It was now clear to the Board of Directors that there really was no point in administering the colony for any longer than was strictly necessary. The question then became what claim could reasonably be made against the Crown, and while the Company submitted a figure of £8 million, most

observers agreed that this optimistic. In July 1919, a commission chaired by former lawyer and Conservative Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord George Cave, was authorised to look into the matter and submit recommendations. After an exhaustive investigation, the Cave Commission finally delivered its report in February 1921, and its recommendations came as a bitter blow to the Company. Crown liability was fixed at a paltry £4.5 million with no consideration for interest. The Commission also ruled that from this figure should be deducted the value of land currently under use by the Company, as well as the value of land distributed for considerations other than cash. This last stipulation was a reminder to all that the cronyism of the Jameson era had not been forgotten. The final value of these deductions was left to independent assessment, while the Company's counterclaim for the value of public buildings and works was disregarded. Finally, the Cave Commission recommended the Company repay £2 million in respect of advances made for expenses relating to the Matabele War.

A Legislative Council election held in 1920, a year after the publication of the Cave Commission's findings, proved to be an early litmus test of public opinion, and unsurprisingly, the vote was a clean sweep for the 'Responsible Government Party'. The implications of this were, of course, quite obvious, and on the whole, at least according to observations at the time, white preference for Responsible Government was echoed in the non-white community, in particular among Asians. The idea of union with South Africa brought with it all of the ugly possibilities of race discrimination already entrenched in South African law. The Indian activist Mohandas K Gandhi was no longer in South Africa, but his victories, such as they were, had certainly not helped matters for Indians in South Africa.

Blacks, in general, were in agreement with this, and moreover, they did not as a body regard amalgamation with Northern Rhodesia with a great deal of enthusiasm, and this had much to do with the likelihood of an influx of black labour from the north devaluing labour in the south. All in all, therefore, public opinion seemed very much to tilt in favour of Responsible Government. Consequently, it became the first task of the 1920 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council to pass by an absolute majority a resolution to request self-government, which, at least from a representative point of view, was not that easy.

Despite its long-standing antipathy, the settler community of Southern Rhodesia had become rather accustomed to the deep purse of the

British South Africa Company, and many worried that the colony would be unable to sustain itself as an independent economy. The territory simply could not turn a profit, and it was this that had reduced the Company to the position that it was in, and before the Imperial Government would contemplate a grant of responsible government, the colony had to show some proof of its financial fitness.

For many settlers, fearful of union with South Africa, and yet pessimistic about Responsible Government, amalgamation with Northern Rhodesia remained an attractive alternative. Unfortunately, however, amalgamation had ceased to be an option for the Company. Since the publication of the Cave Report and the bitter disappointment of the Crown's financial offer, it was now clear that union with South Africa represented the best and only chance of viable restitution.

General Jan Smuts, who had led both the Union and the South Africa Party since General Louis Botha's death in 1919, found, as he had feared, that the rise of Afrikaner nationalism threatened his liberal, pro-British administration. Smuts was determined to bring Southern Rhodesia into the Union, and to this end, he launched an offensive, not only to win over the British South Africa Company, but also the Southern Rhodesian voters themselves. Naturally, the Company proved easier to persuade than the Rhodesian electorate, but Smuts had at his disposal the extravagant means of a wealthy country, and he was in a mood to be generous.

It also happened, however, that South Africa at that time was locked in a bitter and at times violent wave of white labour unrest. Within this, the deep, latent divisions of English and Afrikaans speaking interests in the country were laid bare. The fundamental cause of these disturbances was a crisis of viability faced by mine owners. White wages were prohibitive, and white industrial labour highly organised. To counteract this, industrial, and particularly mining wages were reduced, and the statutory colour bar lifted. The inevitable result was that blacks flooded into industry, and whites were pushed out. As protest strikes were organised, militant Afrikaner nationalists marched on Johannesburg, where they barricaded mines and declared the zone a white worker's republic.

To crush the revolt Smuts deployed force. He mobilised 20,000 troops together with tanks, artillery and even bomber aircraft in a show of strength that resulted in the deaths of some seventy-six strikers. Five thousand arrests were made, and four of the main strike leaders were tried,

convicted and executed. In dealing with all of this, General Smuts revealed a very heavy hand and a ruthless streak. His tactics worked, but he won no friends among the restive white labour unions of Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Indeed, to both labour and the gentrified middle classes of Rhodesia, the whole business was deplorable and far removed from the more civilised, British orientated politics north of the Limpopo.

Smuts, however, was also an urbane, persuasive and charismatic man. He was handsome in appearance, strikingly intelligent, articulate in speech and, unusually among his compatriots, very fond of the British. As a lawyer, a head of state, a British Army general and an international statesman he was perfectly constituted to appeal to a British public. He was quite confident that a deal would be struck with the Company, but until that was achieved, he was not in a position to directly approach the settlers themselves, who ultimately would decide the matter.

Negotiations between Smuts' government and the Company thus went ahead, taking on a cosy outward appearance that alarmed many in the Responsible Government Party. Rumours began to circulate, one, in particular, claiming that the Company was secretly planning to sell the railway system to South Africa, which, if true, would drag Southern Rhodesia into an economic union with South Africa whether she liked it or not. The Legislative Assembly, in the meanwhile, led by the pro-Responsible Government whip Charles Coghlan, achieved the required majority resolution requesting home rule, which was then passed on to a cautious Imperial Government. It was allowed on the basis of this that Responsible Government would be granted not later than October 1924, provided that the Legislative Council could still field a majority position, and show some evidence of financial fitness. This, however, satisfied neither Charles Coghlan himself nor his constituency, and he replied to Parliament with a strident demand for an immediate grant of Responsible Government. A passionate, fist shaking and somewhat alcoholic Irishman, Coghlan ended his speech with a call to arms that might have been more believable on the steps of Stormont. Liberty in rags, he hailed, was better than well-fed tutelage.

The Imperial Government was not inspired to haste, however, and its reply was not published until January the following year. Although welcoming the principle of Responsible g Government, Whitehall suggested that the matter should remain on the table until the Southern

Rhodesian Legislative Council completed its current term. This would bring a solution into force no later than 24 October 1924. The Company, however, was no less anxious than the settlers, now that the Cave Report had settled its rights, for a speedy resolution to the matter. The directors were busy wooing Pretoria, and it was rumoured that Smuts had indeed been very generous.

In the interim, a young Winston Churchill replaced Joseph Chamberlain as Colonial Secretary, bringing new blood to the office, and quickly proposing a second commission of inquiry to look into the question, and the implications of Responsible Government. The composition of the commission suggested that he already accepted Responsible Government as a *fait accompli,* and was concerned only with its practical implementation.

The Commission was chaired by Lord Buxton, a wealthy businessman and prominent British politician who knew the people and countryside of Rhodesia well, and was known to be sympathetic to the Responsible Government position. He was, incidentally, the grandson of Sir Thomas Foxwell Buxton, who met and entertained the amaNdebele Embassy in London in the spring of 1889. Lord Buxton was the current chairman of the Africa Society, and an ex-Governor General of South Africa and he was directed by the Colonial Office to recommend when, and with what safeguards responsible government should be granted to Southern Rhodesia. This would include interim measures for phasing out Company rule, and advice on the procedure of drafting a new constitution. In his report, submitted to the Imperial Government in April 1921, he proposed that a draft constitution be agreed, and put to a referendum no later than May 1922.

A constitutional conference was then held in London, and on 19 January 1922, the details were published. What generated most interest was the clause dealing specifically with native administration. The Imperial Government was again unprepared to trust a self-governing colony to deal equitably and fairly with the needs of the black population. The commissioner and all officials of the native department, therefore, were to be appointed by the British Governor, with the necessary approval of the High Commissioner to South Africa, and after that answerable to the Crown. Land set aside for native reserves would not be contested except under specific circumstances, and then only in exchange for another suitable land. In regards to the broader issue of land, the Imperial

Government, bending the rules to suit itself now decreed that the Company would be paid off from the proceeds of land sales, the price of which should favour the settlers, who had a right to abundant and cheap land. This, after all, was the basis of their settlement of the colony.

The Company, therefore, held on for union with South Africa, which was, in fact, also the imperial preference. There was a general feeling in London that union with South Africa was inevitable at some point, and there was no time like the present. Another reason for the official preference for union with South Africa was that South Africa would pay for it, and according to all indications, pay very well.

As closely as the pundits could call it, the settler community was evenly split. The debate was passionate, and at times polarising, and the stakes indeed were high. At about this time, Jan Smuts arrived in the colony, his job to convince the Responsible Government lobby that union with South Africa was not only in the best interests of the Company but also in theirs. No firm agreement had yet been reached with the Company so he could not be specific, but he assured the settlers that the rewards would be generous. Coghlan and his followers, however, were so gripped by haste that they just could not wait.

Various delegations for and against were then invited to Cape Town for discussions, and every accommodation was made and comforts assured, and the Rhodesians were pressed and persuaded and coerced. At the same time, however, a fresh eruption of labour unrest sparked furious and divisive debates in the South African Parliament, and these the Rhodesians observed, and they were dismayed. The divisions in white South African society were no more clearly revealed than at times like these, and none of it did the Rhodesians care for. To the left and to the right, they returned home unpersuaded. Under pressure from Coghlan, Smuts promised that the proposed terms of union would be published no later than 30 July 1923. After that, it was agreed that a referendum would be held on 27 October to decide.

Smuts' terms of union were duly published, and they were undeniably generous. Southern Rhodesia was to be given preferred representation in the Union House of Assembly and the Senate, as well as substantial financial incentives. As a new 'province' of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia would be accommodated within the existing federal constitution, with certain additional incentives. Southern Rhodesia, for

example, would have ten representatives, more than its economic weight and numbers justified. This meant that 1,200 votes in Rhodesia would have the same value as 2,046 in Natal and 2,958 in the Transvaal. However, ten members in a house of 140 was hardly influence. Southern Rhodesia, or whatever she would be called, would have no independent voice, and nor could Southern Rhodesian voters really guarantee that Smuts would hold on to office. As far as the money was concerned, Smuts' had undoubtedly deep into his pockets, but on the other hand, the land would become a federal asset and taxes would be higher.

And typically, as a politician, Coghlan preferred the prospect of the premiership of a self-governing colony than the administration of a province. He went to work immediately, and tirelessly, lobbying his position, which was, without doubt, well-supported. The other side too, however, was well-supported. Looking north and south, north promised inundation by blacks while south offered the security in numbers of a large white population. In years to come, it would be the missed opportunity of a grand white alliance in southern Africa that would be most deeply lamented, in particular when it could not be reversed.

Lastly, for the British South Africa Company, Smuts dug deepest of all. Almost £7 million in cash was pledged for administrative deficits, public works and railways, leaving the Company with all of its other assets, including mineral, commercial and ranching rights. In addition, Whitehall offered to drop its claim of £2 million war expenses if the colony went to South Africa. A few weeks before the referendum, Smuts paid another flying visit to the colony, touring extensively, and lavishing his much-storied charm and intellect on a population always flattered to hear the British feted.

On November 7, 1823, the day of the referendum, in the middle of a drought and economic depression, and with the smoke and thunder of a virtual war between labour and government in South Africa, the vote went ahead. There was a great deal of stiff cordiality as neighbour greeted neighbour over the polling box, and later over drinks at the club as both sides ruminated in their corners. Out of a total of 14 856 votes cast, those for Responsible Government were 8,774, and for union with South Africa were 5989, while ninety-three papers were spoilt.

The lead editorial of the *Rhodesia Herald* the next morning was pragmatic: 'We trust and believe that the 5,989 Rhodesians who voted for

Union, assisted by the friendly co-operation of the 8,774 who voted for Responsible Government, will sink their differences and work harmoniously for Rhodesia.'

Part II

The Golden Years

1923-1965

Our experience is not unique, we are witnessing the emergence of the proletariat and in this country it just happens to be black – **Godfrey Huggins**

1
The First Parliament

I doubt whether any government has ever made a shabbier bargain with a great Corporation which has performed undoubted and striking services – **Sir Henry Birchenough**, President of the British South Africa Company 1925-1937

At last, the question of governance was decided. Rhodes' vision of a route from Cape to Cairo was dead, Smuts was swept from office the following year, and the new Southern Rhodesian administration got down to business. Letters Patent were published on 24 September 1923, and a week later Southern Rhodesia was formally annexed to the Crown. The first Governor was Sir John Chancellor, to whom Sir Drummond Chaplin handed over, bringing the curtain down on thirty-four years of British South Africa Company rule.

Provision was made for a single legislature of thirty members from which the Governor could appoint six members for various cabinet responsibilities. The Governor would remain the constitutional head of state, with powers that would to a large extent depend on the relationship he enjoyed with the new government. Charles Coghlan was appointed interim premier, pending Legislative Assembly elections. The franchise was available to British subjects over twenty-one, who had passed a literacy test and could prove either assets worth at least £150 sterling or an income of £100 per annum. This mostly protected the ballot against both poor whites and non-whites, with the exception of a handful of Indians.

Coghlan's first cabinet, in the meanwhile, ran rich with the old blood of the Company. For the key portfolios of Treasurer and Colonial Secretary, he selected two past Company treasurers, Percival Donald Fynn and Sir Francis Newton respectively. Major Robert Hudson was appointed both Attorney General and Minister of Defence, and William Mutter Leggate, an outspoken Scottish farmer, was placed in the Ministry of Agriculture. Howard Unwin Moffat, a descendant of the missionary family and former manager of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company, took over at the Ministry of Mines and Public Works.

Coghlan then went directly to the country, evangelising a doctrine of national unity in the interests of strong and stable government. The

Responsible Government Party, which had never really been much more than a pressure group, was dissolved, and a new party formed. The Rhodesia Party was a broad-based, unity party, with a strong bipartisan membership, with only a weak Labour Party in opposition. The country was divided into fifteen two-member constituencies, and the two parties took their campaigns on the road.

On the list of Rhodesia Party candidates for Salisbury was the name Godfrey Huggins. Huggins, a local surgeon and something of a man-about-town, put his name in the hat for the Salisbury North seat, opposing Treasurer Percival Fynn. Both men were ex-unionists and committed imperialists, but there the similarity ended. Huggins was a tall, debonair and affable Englishman, who was widely respected and well-liked, while Fynn was an Irishman and a table-thumper, unmoved by irony and rather doctrinaire. Huggins was the ideal candidate, of course, for the exclusive business, professional and civil service constituency of Salisbury North, and to the surprise of no one, he won.

Huggins was indeed a professional and a very busy man, and it was only with deep reservations that he contested Salisbury North at all, but once victorious, a long and significant political career began. In fact, it would not be overstating the matter to place him in the triumvirate of men who served, guided and governed Rhodesia through its brief and turbulent history. The first of these was Cecil John Rhodes, and the last would be Ian Douglas Smith, but the middle years of growth, prosperity and leisure belonged to the paternal, engaging and much loved Godfrey Huggins.

On 18 February 1911, after a long and tedious train journey up from the Cape, Godfrey Huggins stepped onto the platform of Salisbury Station for the first time. A few days earlier, upon his disembarkation in Cape Town, he was pleasantly surprised, for although rather parochial, the city and its surroundings were also unexpectedly cultured. This boded well, and it was with some renewed confidence that he set off on the long journey north to Salisbury. The following morning, however, as the train pulled into Kimberley, the aspects were unmistakably rougher. A few hours later, Mafeking was a shock, the endless bushveld of Bechuanaland another, and the flyblown settlement of Bulawayo yet another. He sat sweltering on the concourse of Bulawayo station, two trains standing on the platform. One was heading north to Salisbury, and the other returning to Cape Town.

Godfrey Huggins, however, was an Englishman, and true to his word, so it was onto the overnight express to Salisbury that he stepped. Rhodesia Railways, as a legacy of Cecil Rhodes, ran an elegant service, and soon Huggins was enjoying a whisky and soda and watching the green, rain-soaked veld pass by. Within an hour or so, the character of the land began to change, and by evening he found himself charmed by the same beautiful country that had so captivated Archibald Colquhoun. A landscape of low, broken hills punctuated by savannah grassland and woods, and pleasantly cool compared to the humid expanse of Bechuanaland. He slept that night between starched Rhodesia Railways sheets and woke in the morning to a tray of tea served by a native in a white uniform and gloves.

Godfrey Huggins' story until that point held a lot in common with the early life of Cecil John Rhodes. He suffered a chronic inner ear infection as a child that was a source of ongoing trauma. It disrupted his early education and left him with a permanent hearing impairment. Unlike Rhodes, however, it was not Huggins' health that brought him to the colonies. Armed with a Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, he opted for the colonies simply as a means to get ahead. He applied for and was given the position of locum with the Salisbury practice of Doctors Appleyard and Cheadle, and from that vantage, he viewed his future in Southern Rhodesia with amiable optimism.

Huggins was precisely the sort of man to do very well in colonies. He was social, unfailingly pleasant, and with his tall and angular frame bent forward confidentially, he went down very well in Salisbury society. Handsome, well-bred and educated, he was conscientious too and willing at the drop of a hat to tramp the countryside and operate on a butcher's block. Everything he did, he did unfailingly well. Soon enough he was put up for membership of the Salisbury Club and introduced to the great and the good of the local settler community. Before long he could count himself among the handful civil servants and businessmen who made up the elite of Salisbury society.

By 1911, Salisbury was at best a rustic provincial capital, scattered over a wide expanse of open veld. Roads were unpaved and grass uncut, but beneath that unpolished exterior a certain energy and charm were unmistakable. Here and there odd flourish of imperial architecture competed with red brick and corrugated iron, and in the Avenues and Belgravia, large and elegant homes were a common sight. The Town House,

for example, with its gables and pillars, and, of course, the splendidly imperial, but rather isolated Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and Library. Most of the wealthier private dwellings were situated in the northern residential district, in around the Administrator's residence. The central commercial precinct was Manica Avenue, offering a post office, a bank, several outfitters as well as a variety of fancy goods emporiums and professional offices. Beyond the periphery of the city lay scattered farms and smallholdings, and beyond that the open veld. The railway was the primary means of transport between the centres of Salisbury, Bulawayo and Umtali, while in the city, rickshaws, trams and bicycles dominated, with an occasional motorcar to stir up dust or churn up mud.

Before his term of service with Cheadle and Applegate was completed, Huggins was offered a partnership in the practice, which placed him in something of a dilemma. Should he return to London, as had been his intention, or should he throw his lot in with Southern Rhodesia? It was not an easy choice. He was certainly found the idea of a career in London attractive, at the centre of things, but he could also not deny the powerful attraction of life in the colonies. Professionally, for example, he routinely performed procedures that would have been denied to him for years in London. There, he was one of many, but in Salisbury, he was a big fish, and there was much to be said for that. Besides that, a man of his social background could never replicate in England the life he enjoyed in Salisbury. It was just not possible. He owned a horse and joined the local hunt, fly-fished in the Eastern Highlands and hobnobbed with lords and ladies. Although he played tennis, cricket and polo indifferently, the sporting life kept him in the company of the likes of Sir William Milton, and a commission in the Southern Rhodesia Volunteer Regiment gave him membership of the officer's mess.

These were all the advantages of life for a British middle-class gentleman in Southern Rhodesia, and they indeed were not to be sniffed at. And then, of course, there was the climate. As Rhodes had once observed, it was one that a white man could tolerate. Even the evergreen colonial race issue was not particularly acrimonious. Like all of his contemporaries, Huggins saw blacks as part of the mission of empire, and still very much in the kindergarten of life. They were to be taught, and guided, but not misused or maligned. One day in the distant future they might be regarded

as equal and then given some share in their destiny, but such a thing would never happen in his lifetime, and nor, for that matter, in his grandchildren's.

And so, needless to say, Godfrey Huggins accepted a partnership and stayed in Southern Rhodesia. His career included service during World War I and the great flu epidemic of 1918. He married, remained a distant observer of politics and, as we have seen, found himself somewhat unwillingly seconded as a candidate for the Rhodesia Party in the first general election. After that, he was drawn into the active life of parliament over many issues, such as race, the civil service, immigration and health. Popular myth will have it that he was at all times a reluctant politician, but was never true. Even in the mild climate of Rhodesian affairs-of-state, it is unlikely that he could have risen to the highest office, and stuck to it through war and change without a powerful instinct to do so. His tools were his wit, charm and sense of humour, but seldom did he fail to find the heart of the matter, and if his oratory was always amusing, it was never without substance.

As expected, meanwhile, the white electorate formed up overwhelmingly behind the Rhodesia Party, with Labour gaining no seats at all, and the opposition amounting to just four independents. Huggins took his seat on the backbenches while Percival Fynn took his in the cabinet. As Coghlan had hoped, the composition of that first parliament reflected reasonably accurately the social demographic of the colony. There was a clique of the upper management of such industries as the railways, a bloc of retired civil servants, a handful of white farmers, a few established leftists and a sprinkling of businessmen and professionals.

The business of self-government took some time to get off its feet, and in part, this can be explained by a lack of professionalism on every side. Charles Coghlan, passionate and committed, was nonetheless an ideologue with an autocratic streak. He was an unattractive man, overly serious and extremely sensitive to criticism. When the editor of the *Rhodesia Herald*, Mr R.H Douglas, slated Agriculture Minister William Leggate's proposals for the disposal of unalienated land, Coghlan took personal umbrage. He wrote angrily to Argus General Manager John Martin, complaining that Douglas had launched his criticism before the government was able to adequately explain its proposals. He added darkly that a new daily newspaper might be licensed for the territory, and in

fairness to his editor, John Martin forwarded a copy of this letter to the *Rhodesia Herald* office.

Douglas was stung and felt that the attack was unjustified. To his mind, his reporting had always been moderate and reserved in its criticism of the government. Until then, he and Coghlan had been on the most cordial terms. Both were members of the Salisbury Club and were regularly to be seen sharing a table. In general, although the *Herald* was not particularly pro-government, the relationship between press and parliament was good. The issue came to a head, however, when Coghlan put William Leggate up for membership of the Salisbury Club, only to find him blackballed by the Douglas faction. Although this was rectified very quickly, and Leggate was welcomed as a member, Coghlan never entirely forgave Douglas that particular piece of villainy.

2
Another Chapter of the Tobacco Story

If you're going through hell, keep going – **Winston Churchill**

One of the most significant issues of the inter-war period was immigration. In a post-war environment, a great many demobilised soldiers looked to the colonies for better prospects, and Southern Rhodesia was a popular destination. This was in part because of generous terms for the acquisition of land, and in part because of a superb climate. The competition was stiff, however, and both Northern and Southern Rhodesia, along with South Africa, Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda were all keen to promote the prospects of their particular colony. The British Empire Exhibition, held in London between 1924 and 1925 and organised to showcase the Empire, was, in the end, a travel fair for empire immigration.

The Empire Exhibition was held in the newly-built Wembley, or Empire Stadium in northwest London, featuring a vast array of stalls and displays from all over the Empire. An astonishing twenty-seven million visitors passed through the gates, and the first Royal Mail commemorative stamp was issued to mark the occasion. Fifty-five British dominions, colonies and protectorates were represented, and Lord Robert Baden-Powell organised the largest Boy Scout Jamboree to date. The Southern Rhodesian stall featured primarily agricultural products, including the perennials of cotton, maize and beef, but most importantly on this occasion, the Virginia gold tobacco upon which so much hope was pinned.

The unofficial Rhodesian representative at the event was the Cornish baronet Sir Richard Bourchier Wrey, competing lustily for the attention of British ex-servicemen with not only the other African colonies but also Australia, New Zealand and Canada. “With luck and a modest reserve to tide over a possible bad season”, he declared, “there is a fortune in either cotton or tobacco growing in Southern Rhodesia. The soil is right, the climate is right, labour is plentiful and cheap, and there is an unlimited market for all we can produce.”

This airy prognostication was backed up by a British tobacco ‘expert’ who visited the Rhodesian exhibition, and after testing samples of leaf, stated that it would not so much be a question of finding markets for Rhodesian tobacco, but producing enough quality leaf to meet the demand.

In July 1925, the British Government also contributed to a potential boom in the industry by increasing the imperial preference by fifty per cent This meant that empire leaf was charged only three-quarters of the standard import duty paid to the government by American producers.

This was all rather heady stuff, and it encouraged some young Englishmen to sign up then and there for a grant of agricultural land. The tobacco industry was still young, but it held out almost infinite promise. Three million pound weight of Virginia and 500,000-pound weight of Turkish leaf was the product of the 1921 season, exceeding pre-war highs, and introducing some cautious optimism. However, Rhodesian farms still covered only about 250,000 acres of land, consisting of just over 2,000 commercial properties. In 1921, Southern Rhodesian farmers and their dependents made up only twenty-five per cent of the white population. Cattle, maize and tobacco were emerging as the mainstays, although in 1923, production was diversified when Lowveld pioneer Murray MacDougall commissioned the first commercial irrigation furrow. This project was to take seven years of backbreaking labour to compete, but in 1931 it would reward the visionary Scotsman with the sight of water flowing onto the fields of what would become the mighty Triangle Sugar Estates. With tobacco confidently projected to boom, many newcomers sunk their life's savings into a tract of Mashonaland, but unfortunately for these optimistic pioneers, no sooner had the doors shut on the Empire Exhibition than Rhodesian tobacco began to bear down on its second point of crisis.

This second collapse was due in no small part to unwarranted caution on the part of tobacco growers reacting to earlier disasters. All but a few of the growers had formed up under the umbrella of the Tobacco Warehouse, and as a cooperative body, they entered into a three-year contract with their main South African purchaser, the United Tobacco Company. The object of this arrangement was to ensure a market for future production at fixed prices according to grades. In theory, this would take a lot of the guesswork out of marketing and would allow farmers to concentrate on production in the sure knowledge that they would be paid a fair price. On paper, the whole arrangement was very reasonable. However, the onus was on the buyers, not the sellers to determine the grade of the leaf, and it was here that the tobacco producers revealed their naivety.

If it happened that a trace of green leaf could be found in a bale of tobacco, the price could be forced down. Buyers naturally began searching diligently until the merest hint of green was exposed, and sellers had no choice but to comply. There was a time when primary producers might have shrugged off this sort of canny monopolistic behaviour, but to an elected legislature looking for ways to assert its independence, such issues were manna. Monopolistic trade practices were outdated, and there was no place for them in Rhodesia.

It was Godfrey Huggins who was the first to take up the topic, and in his debut speech to Parliament, he condemned United Tobacco price fixing. Coghlan, although he was a solicitor and not particularly touched by agricultural issues, was always receptive to the outrage of the common man, and he was impressed by Huggins' call to action. His law practice had been built on challenging the British South Africa Company, and he was as sensitive to the scent of exploitation as anybody. He undertook to investigate tobacco marketing procedures in the colony, and declared that he would pepper the tails of any offenders if it turned out that Huggins was right.

Despite widespread antipathy towards United Tobacco, the fact remained that South Africa was Southern Rhodesia's only real market, and rocking that particular boat made many a tobacco farmer nervous. Agriculture Minister William Leggate was himself a farmer and was as a consequence very sensitive to these concerns. He railed fitfully at the cavalier treatment of local farmers and fired the first shots in a hot war at a farmers meeting held in Arcturus in April 1924. His speech was later widely reported in the press.

The time had come, he told his audience of angry farmers, for the tobacco industry to strive to open new markets beyond South Africa. It was in this way alone that the Rhodesian tobacco industry would be able to "get out of the hands of that monopoly, the United Tobacco Company, which this last few years has been considered by the tobacco growers of this country as a grievous burden".

This was fighting talk, and United Tobacco was swift to respond. Both Leggate and the *Rhodesia Herald* were threatened with legal action if the government's defamatory comments were not withdrawn. Those, of course, were innocent days when ministers of government were bound by the law, and it was therefore expected that Leggate would follow the rather

hasty apology published by the *Rhodesia Herald* with one of his own. However, he did no such thing, and instead composed a lengthy letter that the *Rhodesia Herald* only published with stated reservations. In it, Leggate not only reinforced his point but also drove home some further sobering facts about the state of the Southern Rhodesian tobacco industry.

Prices for Rhodesian tobacco had dropped since the 1917-18 season when the crop fetched 9*s* 8*d* per pound weight. In the 1922-23 for example, the cost per pound managed only 8*s* 5*d*. In 1921 there were about 9,000 acres under Virginia tobacco, but this had been reduced to only about 6,300 by the end of 1924. Clearly, Leggate surmised, tobacco growers were being squeezed out of production by monopolistic trading practices, and as things stood, these were primarily being perpetrated by United Tobacco. He also pointed out that tax-free dividends, paid to UTC shareholders between 1917 and 1923, were at a respectable level of between twenty-five and thirty per cent, which was a clear indication that good profits were being made on Rhodesian tobacco in Johannesburg. Leggate concluded with a firm commitment to aid in every possible way the efforts of local producers to open up overseas markets. Clearly, he had in mind the British market, which remained the Holy Grail.

The result of Leggate's minor campaign was that United Tobacco refrained from any legal action, and instead released the Tobacco Warehouse from its contract to the extent that ten per cent of the crop could be sold in Britain. Samples of Rhodesian leaf were immediately dispatched to the United Kingdom, where they were well received and fetched prices exceeding those being paid by South African buyers. Once again, optimistic but untested projections were made that it was not so much a question of finding a market for Rhodesian tobacco, as growing enough to fulfil future demand. At that time, the United Kingdom sourced ninety-four per cent of tobacco supplies from the United States, with only a nominal supplement sourced from empire producers. Southern Rhodesia, however, now had a foot in the door, and that gap would widen over the next few years.

Warnings were issued to South African tobacco buyers that contracts would not be renewed under previous terms. As the letters went out, Rhodesian growers sized up the British market with a growing sense of optimism. South African manufacturers were spurred into a willingness to pay more, but by then it was too late. Rhodesian farmers had once again begun to tilt dangerously towards the siren call of British marketers. Prices

increased, immigration increased, and a higher acreage of land was put under tobacco. Tobacco barns became a feature of parts of there Mashonaland landscape were tobacco could never be grown. Each month the ignorant and the hopeful rushed to try their luck on any piece of earth where a plough could be sunk.

Opening the Salisbury Agricultural Show of 1927, the Secretary of State for the Dominions, the Right Honourable Colonel Leo Amery chose for his speech the subject of increased British markets for Rhodesian Tobacco. He predicted that a time would come when Rhodesian tobacco producers would be growing more than the United Kingdom could absorb. That day, of course, lay far in the future, and for the time being Britain could take up to ten times as much as local farmers were currently producing. While Amery's speech was clearly little less than delusional, the unworldly Rhodesian tobacco growers swallowed it whole, and cheering the news, carried on with scarcely a backward glance.

It turned out, however, that the bonds of loyalty linking Britain to her traditional suppliers were not quite so easily broken. It was also true that Rhodesian Virginia leaf could never be authentic since it was not grown in Virginia. Accordingly, for the time being, the Rhodesian product was used mainly by British manufacturers to blend with American leaf, and as such, it did not compete in any significant way.

In the meanwhile, William Leggate followed Colonel Amery onto the podium that afternoon, and to the beery appreciation of all listening, added his own sprinkling of hazy facts to the brew. In 1924, he stated, tobacco exports to the United Kingdom amounted to just 700,000-pound weight. The current stockpile now sitting in British warehouses was a staggering 10 million pound weight. What neither Leggate nor his audience appreciated was the vital difference between a product sitting on a warehouse floor and a product sold and paid for.

In the wake of the Empire Exhibition, representatives of the Imperial Tobacco Company, Britain's largest tobacco buyer, visited Rhodesia to establish a trade relationship, but again only as a counterpoise to American suppliers. In the event, Imperial Tobacco over-purchased, which merely added to an already existing stockpile of Rhodesian tobacco. It was estimated that at current rates of usage, British manufacturers were sitting on at least seven years worth of supply. The 1927 crop, of which Leggate was so proud, had in fact been exported to England purely as a

matter of speculation. The Tobacco Warehouse borrowed money to finance growers against the security of the crop, and at the same time retained agents in Britain to sell off the leaf. Try as they might, however, the ten million pound weight proved to be unsaleable. The bank was no longer willing to accept the leaf as security and called in the loan. The entire tobacco industry in Rhodesia was, for the second time in its short history, and mainly for the same reasons, brought to the brink.

The bank, in the meanwhile, could dump the surplus tonnage at bankruptcy rates, but that would not cover the debt, and moreover, it would set a very poor precedent for Rhodesian tobacco in the future. At that moment, the already cash-strapped government of Rhodesia weighed in and assumed the Tobacco Warehouse's liability. The stockpile in London remained the property of the growers, but they collectively owed the government all they had received as an advance. And there was more. The 1928 crop, estimated at twenty-four million pound weight, was due on the auction floors soon, and by all accounts, it now had no market whatsoever.

Again the government stepped in, advancing the Tobacco Warehouse a percentage per pound in the hope that some of this would be returned when the leaf was sold. This did not happen. While foreign speculators went on to make a fortune, Rhodesian growers survived by the slimmest of margins. The Government reeled under an outlay of over £500,000 from average annual revenues of only £2.5 million.

However, such were the trials of Rhodesian agriculture in the roaring twenties. Tobacco farmers, in truth, were the poor relations of an otherwise reasonably steady farming economy. Maize and cattle remained the bedrock of a sector that faltered only rarely on its march to general prosperity. It had, however, been a bold decision on the part of a small treasury to gamble so heavily on a relatively untested industry. This early faith displayed great political maturity and would be amply justified in years to come.

3
The First Steps of Black and White

No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as writing a poem – **Booker T Washington**

By the standards of the time Charles Coghlan was not a racially intolerant man, and nor was he unaware of how vulnerable and isolated the natives of Southern Rhodesia were. He did not, therefore, resent the powers reserved to the Crown regarding native administration, and in fact, welcomed these as liberating he and his cabinet from any concerns related to the silent majority.

The Native Affairs Department was the body concerned with administering the native reserves, and although technically Coghlan held that portfolio, under the new administration, as under the old, it remained almost a state within a state. At the handover of government, white Rhodesians were given effective legislative control over internal affairs as they related to themselves, but the management of internal affairs as they related to blacks was reserved by the Crown. This was operated through a chain of responsibility that ran from the Chief Native Commissioner through the Governor in Council to the High Commissioner in South Africa, and finally the Secretary of State. Coghlan and the Southern Rhodesian cabinet were bypassed entirely. Policy within the Native Affairs Department required the approval of the Governor, who in turn answered to the High Commissioner. Legislation with any direct bearing on the black population was subject to Imperial Government veto, although in practice this was almost never applied. In fact, the British Government tried to remain as aloof as possible from the administration of the colony, and as a consequence, the Chief Native Commissioner found himself in a position of virtual autonomy. He administered law, justice and the collection of taxes in the native reserves, as an area of separate responsibility, and distinct from the work of the colony.

The obvious potential for abuse within this system was mitigated by the fact that the Native Affairs Department was manned by professional civil servants who took pride in their work. Their standards were high thanks to a Colonial Service recently invigorated by the humanising effect of World War I. Individual native commissioners had come to view

themselves less as the instruments of colonial repression than as a shield from the worst of its excesses. Their attitude tended to be paternal, and their powers in the management and organisation of native affairs extensive.

At the handover, there were two provinces in the colony. These were Mashonaland and Matabeleland, within which were thirty-two native districts, each the responsibility of an individual native commissioner, who managed several assistants responsible for the various sub-districts. Sub-districts were themselves divided into chiefdoms that comprised headmen's districts and kraals under kraal heads. Chiefs were selected according to what was understood to be local custom, after which they became in effect salaried administrative assistants to the native commissioners. They were invested with the authority of constables, paid an allowance, and were required to notify their commissioner of criminal activity, as well as to publicise government orders and aid in the collection of taxes. Headmen were appointed by the commissioner on the advice of the chiefs, who were assisted by kraal heads. The fundamental mandate of the department was the safeguarding of African interests, which in practice meant maintaining a framework of 'traditional life'.

All this was symptomatic of an imperial government attempting to evolve a deeper appreciation of the rights of indigenous peoples as British subjects. One of the many sea-changes in global consciousness brought about by World War I was a general revision of established colonial administration practices. After the war, the Colonial Service was institutionalised and professionalised and put mostly in the hands of young, educated and socially conscious Britons. These men took overseas with them both a high standard of training, and a determination to create for their children, and the children of the empire as a whole, a better world. For a new generation of blacks gaining political acumen, this ought to have been a great comfort, but in many cases, it was not. The Southern Rhodesia Native Department was structured by necessity as a system of micro-management that controlled every detail of life in the black communities. It was still based on the premise that black people were privates in the Rhodesian economic army, a rank that it was intended they should occupy for some time to come.

By the 1920s, however, Black political consciousness was developing considerable momentum. The first generation of blacks to experience colonisation were so shocked by the experience that they simply

complied, but by the second generation, as young blacks were beginning to avail themselves of education, they began to organise. It was a South African, however, Abraham Twala, who in 1923 founded the 'Bantu Voters Association', the first wholly black political alliance to be formed in Southern Rhodesia. Then, in 1927, two trade unionists from Nyasaland tried to organise a union among black workers in Southern Rhodesia, using the example of the influential South African 'Industrial and Commercial Workers Union'. The effort, however, was probably premature, and it failed. By comparison to surrounding colonies, Rhodesian blacks remained tentative, nervous and lacking in education.

One significant result of the two rebellions of 1896 was the almost complete shattering of tribal society. The amaNdebele enjoyed the benefits of a negotiated truce that allowed their political structures to remain valid, and respected. The maShona, on the other hand, were given no such privilege and were beaten soundly and thoroughly. Their leadership and political structures were decimated, and their sense of tribal cohesion critically undermined. As a result, the amaNdebele were quicker to recognise the potentialities offered by white society and take up the useful aspects of it, forming as they did the pre-cursors to modern political resistance. Early union organisation, social clubs and proto-political parties all emerged, if not always under amaNdebele tutelage, then certainly predominantly in Bulawayo. It was, however, the maShona who formed the bedrock of educated blacks in those early days, and despite their disadvantages, it was they who quickly overtook the naturally conservative amaNdebele in matters of schooling, religion, commerce and politics.

The administration, even from the earliest days, encouraged the provision of education to blacks, at least on a basic level, to provide for the low-level staffing of a growing civil service, army and constabulary. However, for a black person to acquire material wealth using mainstream commerce as was the primary ambition of all, was still almost impossible. Thirty-five years had passed since the Pioneer Column arrived in Mashonaland, and the generation that met it had mostly died off. Of the new generation, most lived and viewed life in a manner little different from their forefathers, although a handful of the most gifted amongst them understood their world, and desired more from it. They recognised that at the root of white predominance was wealth, and at the heart of that wealth sat capital and education.

Young blacks in the early decades of the century were mesmerised by education, and the only avenue available at that time to gain an education was the Christian missions. Christianity made quiet but steady progress in the colony in the aftermath of the occupation, and it was the missionaries who scattered the first and vital seeds of education in the rural communities. As the Reverend Thompson Samkange, one of the first of this new generation of blacks, and the founder of an indigenous political dynasty observed:

"The white man has changed our world…he has aroused in us the stirring of divine discontent. [Yet] it is amazing how little the white man really knows about the stirring of new life in the native peoples living in his midst."

Of the sixty or more black nationalists active during the 1960s and 1970s, forty-eight received at least their early education from a missionary school, and eighteen were born to parents who were either black evangelists or missionary schoolteachers themselves. Most were born between the wars and had no recollection of traditional native autocracy or the catastrophic changes that had overtaken their patents.

The Portuguese, of course, introduced Christianity into central Africa, and in those early days, some missionary work was attempted, but it was only in 1887, with the founding of the Jesuit Empandeni Mission, that the modern missionary tradition in Rhodesia began. A second Jesuit group came in behind the Pioneer Column and established the now famous Kutama Mission, where a young revolutionary by the name of Robert Gabriel Mugabe would receive his early education. After that, it became something of a race. In September 1891 Missionaries from the South African Dutch Reformed Church opened the Morgenster Mission, just outside Fort Victoria. Two months later, the Salvation Army began work on a mission in the Mazowe area. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established an important station in Mount Selinda in 1893, and another in Chikore in 1895. Seventh Day Adventists founded Solusi Mission in Matabeleland in 1894; the American Methodist Episcopal Church, under the famous Bishop Hartzell, established Old Umtali Mission in 1898 while the Brethren in Christ opened the Matopos Mission in 1898. The South African General Mission began the Rusitu Mission north of Chipinga in 1897, and after 1898 a number of others, including the Presbyterian Church of SA, the Church of Sweden, the Swedish Free

Church Mission, the Free Methodist Church and the South African Baptist Missionary Society squeezed in to make their contribution to this burst of evangelical zeal.

One of the largest and most successful missionary schools was a Wesleyan Institute established in the Zvimba Chieftaincy of Lomagundi. The Nenguwo Institute, later renamed the Waddilove Institute, was created primarily to produce black teachers, catechists and evangelists to widen the reach of education and the gospel. Perhaps the most famous black son of Waddilove was the Reverend Thompson Samkange, who in many ways epitomised and set the standard for a progression of nationalists and revolutionaries to follow. Samkange, himself a moderate nationalist, was the nation's first substantive black political spokesman.

Thompson Samkange was born in 1893, with the traditional name of Mushore, a member of a noble family steeped in traditional belief and practice. His father Mawodzewa was a hunter of the Zvimba Chieftaincy, and while he tried to keep his son within the traditions of tribal life, he did not resist when he was drawn, along with many others, to an exciting alternative. The young Samkange's first exposure to literacy and Christianity came when, in his late teens, he found work in the cotton settlement of Gatooma. On his return home, he entered the Nenguwo Institute, and there he came under the influence of the pioneer Methodist missionary John White. He was baptised and assumed the new Christian name of Thompson. From there his journey became almost a stereotype.

Conditions at Nenguwo in the early part of the century, although primitive, were also richly infused with illicit liberation theology. For the first time, black students from all over Rhodesia gathered and mingled in an atmosphere of intellectualism, discussion and debate. The idea of individuality, and of expressive thought, was so alien to traditional Bantu culture that the sense of individual liberty felt by these young men must have been magnificent. The sheer potentiality, the expanded horizons and possible achievements seemed unlimited.

In this environment, Thompson Samkange, and a handful of others shone, and it did not take long for him to attract attention. Having completed his standard six, he became a teacher himself, and then married his spiritual and temporal partner, Grace Mano. Theirs was one of very few monogamous, Christian marriages amongst blacks at that time, and in due

course, Grace Samkange grew into an influential social activist and political pioneer in her own right.

In 1922, in the meanwhile, Thompson was posted to the rough and ready mining town of Wankie, where he was to conduct pastoral work among the mixed inhabitants of the worker's compounds. There he found life difficult and often degraded. Men from varied backgrounds, usually separated by vast distances from their communities and families, laboured and lived for extended periods in a state of virtual confinement. At that time he also began to involve himself in the internal organisation of the Wesleyan Church, and at the 1922 'Wesleyan Evangelists and Teachers Association Convention', Samkange was appointed General Secretary under the presidency of John White.

Emboldened by this, Thompson Samkange soon found himself contemplating more far-reaching organisational changes in the church, including the founding of a body that would bring together representatives of all the Protestant churches of Southern Rhodesia. He urged John White to press on the church executive the need for an exclusively African conference, and in 1927 the decision was made to appoint a special committee to set up the first African Missionary Conference. What we can see here is political organisation beginning to occur under the aegis of the church. It was an important moment in the transition from tribal to constitutional politics. Blacks had no hope of entering mainstream politics, certainly not in the short term, but in the church, they had the opportunity to rise through the ranks, and organise.

The following year Thompson Samkange was accepted as a candidate for the ministry, and in Bulawayo, he began the seven-year process of testing and examination. This was a critical time for him, both for his rise within the church and for his interaction with urban African society, for it was there that the embryo of radical black consciousness was beginning to gestate. In March 1928, the first Missionary Conference of Christian Natives was held, with John White as chairman, but crucially, with Samkange serving as secretary. The conference was supported by a broad spectrum of missionary societies and was a triumph for both Samkange personally, and for the young movement of black intellectual consciousness.

All of this, of course, was taking place outside the field of vision of most whites in the colony. Black education was somewhat outside the scope

of interest of most whites, and whatever the missionaries were up to in the native reserves was their business. While Rhodes was alive, however, he was anxious that missionaries be granted free access into the colony, and this mainly because of their mandate to provide health and education to the natives. The British South Africa Company made available liberal grants of land, until, by 1925, upwards of 400,000 acres was under occupation by various missionary bodies.

An official, government native education policy was slow to take shape, but it did so, and despite it being informal for a very long time, one or two guiding principals did emerge. The first was an emphasis on industrial training. It was generally agreed that limited education should be given to blacks on a broad front so that large numbers could be introduced to literacy at a measured pace. This was in marked contrast to the Northern Rhodesian approach of educating to a high level those few that showed particular promise. This, it was felt in Southern Rhodesia, would merely give rise to a superficial intellectualism that might overly impress those who did not have any education at all. Blacks would be given what training they needed to make them useful workers in agriculture and industry, including a working proficiency in English. It was the opinion of the Chief Native Commissioner of Mashonaland, expressed in his report of 1909, that "…purely literary education should not be considered for years to come; the policy should be to develop the native's natural proclivities first, on lines least likely to lead to any risk of clashing with Europeans."

One gets the impression that the Native Commissioner was not so much defining policy here as striking a cautionary note. For black education to survive, it must be compliant with and compatible with its more resource-rich cousin of white education. Sir James Graham, Secretary to the Law Department of the Cape of Good Hope, conducted an inquiry into native affairs in 1911, and among his many observations was one implying that the principal responsibility of the dominant race was to impart some measure of its own cultural heritage to the emerging race. This, he added, could be done without fear, because the superior quality of white intellect and workmanship must always triumph, and in any case, for many years to come, the instruction given to Africans would be of a rudimentary and practical nature.

Over and above all this, it was clear that the colony had a lesser need for blacks aspiring to higher education than black teachers and

educators on various levels who could lead the majority forth out of ignorance. Clear also was the fact that without a clearly defined education policy, the missionary organisations, and a few underfunded government schools could never satisfy the projected demand for native education.

Before the 1924 session, the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly gave no formal consideration at all to the question of native education. This changed, however, with the advent of Responsible Government, at which point the white settler community had developed a unique and permanent identity with the country. With this came the realisation that the issue of race and racial dichotomy would be an ongoing fact of life. Ignoring the blacks might have been justified as the colony fought to establish itself, but by the 1920s it was clear that a social blueprint would be necessary to effectively map the way forward. Key to this process was the fact that black education could no longer be left exclusively to the missionaries but had to come under formal government control. This marked the beginning of a period of willingness on the part of the white community to recognise blacks as partners, albeit very junior partners, in the enterprise of nationhood.

The ‘Native Problem’ had already to some degree been observed and recognised, and evidence of this can be found in some early aspects of the law that clearly reflected white concern at growing black influence. The Land Apportionment and Labour Conciliation Acts of the 1930s had not yet been drafted, but an informal convention dating from self-government divided the land of Southern Rhodesia into European and African quarters, with urban segregation an almost organic process. It was, however, the few articles of legislation related to sex that were perhaps most interesting, and most instructive.

A certain amount of sexual intersection along colour lines was to be expected during the early phases of the colony’s development, and for want of respectable white women, the usage of black women was tolerated, if not precisely approved of. It was, however, so widely practised, and the countryside so vast that it could hardly be effectively legislated against. As more white women arrived in the territory, however, interracial sexual misadventure and miscegenation diminished to a fringe activity that typically occurred in the domestic environment, were a noticeable preference developed among white housewives for male house servants, to keep out of the home the most obvious source of temptation.

Those whites who openly took black wives and parented half-breed children, were never wholly welcomed back into the mainstream of white society. Even such a celebrated man as Frederick Courtney Selous, who fathered at least one mixed blood child, was extremely cautious about revealing this fact, and it only emerged when his son James John Selous was discovered by the press in the 1960s. Until very recently, for a white woman in southern Africa to take a black husband was as unheard of as it was shocking. Ostracisation from the community would immediately render normal life for such a woman impossible, and she would need either to seek refuge deep in black culture, where her presence would also be unwelcome, or simply to leave the territory altogether.

The law was increasingly reflective of this attitude, and in 1903 two important articles of legislation were passed. The first was the 'Immorality Suppression Ordinance' that made extramarital intercourse between a black man and a white woman illegal, the maximum penalty for the man being five years and the woman two. The second was legislation that imposed the death penalty for attempted rape. Actual rape was already a capital offence, but enforcement was complicated by the fact that a white woman could not reasonably be expected to admit to having been raped by a black man. However to *accuse* a black man of *attempting* to rape her was much easier, and from then on it was deemed sufficient to warrant a sentence of death.

These laws, as well as a gamut of other less clearly defined racial anomalies, quickly alerted blacks to the lie of the land. The natives were still mainly confined to Jameson era reserves and tolerated outside of these only when providing labour for white mining, agriculture and industry. Blacks looked increasingly to the missions and the equalising philosophy of Christianity for salvation in the midst of such social ruin. When they learned to pray, many prayed for deliverance.

"We pray to God Almighty, our Father and in Christ His only Begotten Son to bless this work and that through His power a Moses or Joshua may be raised among our native men, to lead the tribes of Africa from Egypt to Canaan."[3]

Such a Moses would not arise until 1928 when Robert Mugabe was born and plucked from the river by the Jesuit Fathers of Kutama Mission. Before him, however, there came Mathew Zvimba, a Moses of sorts, but a flawed and headstrong prophet born far too early to be of use to the revolution. Mathew Zvimba was one of two brothers born to Chief Chigaga

of the Zvimba lineage. As migrant workers in Salisbury in 1900, the two were converted to Christianity. Later, Mathew was admitted to the Nenguwo Institute, from where he emerged as a widely respected teacher and evangelist. Unlike others, however, who meekly progressed through the lower levels of the church hierarchy, he displayed both an unmanageable pride and a bold and confrontational nature. To his assessors, he was excellent material, but tending to the insolent, character traits would become his signature, and over the years would carry him far in his confrontation with the white religious and secular establishment.

In 1909, Mathew Zvimba established a branch of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission at his home kraal in Zvimba, and there he committed himself to the work of educating and converting his people. He did so, however, according to his own conscience and with an independence of mind that brought him increasingly into conflict with the white missionaries under whom he nominally worked. The Nenguwo Institute did encourage a degree of independence among its black catechists and teachers, but only a degree. A feature of the work of Reverend Thompson Samkange was a gradualist, and indeed a respectful loosening of the paternal bonds in church society, bonds that tended to limit black responsibility for their own good. He fought from within the church establishment, while at all times remaining loyal to it. His confrontations with the white doyens of the Wesleyan church were on occasions sharp, but never permanently damaging. Mathew Zvimba, on the other hand, chose a directly confrontational stance that belonged strictly to another generation.

In 1915, Mathew Zvimba established his own independent church, the ‘Original Church of the White Bird’, reflective of a growing handful of breakaway denominations across the region, adhering loosely to the principal of ‘Ethiopianism’. The emergence of Ethiopianism as a denominational doctrine marks a key moment in the evolution of black nationalism in southern Africa. The central concept relies on a loose interpretation of Psalm 68:31, that read ‘Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth its hands unto God.’ The psalm was identified in 1882 by a progressive black nationalist Wesleyan minister in Pretoria by the name of Mangena Mokone, and his interpretation of it was simply that Africa, and the people of Africa, including the African diaspora, would soon link hands with God in the common purpose of liberating themselves, and all of the enslaved masses of the world.

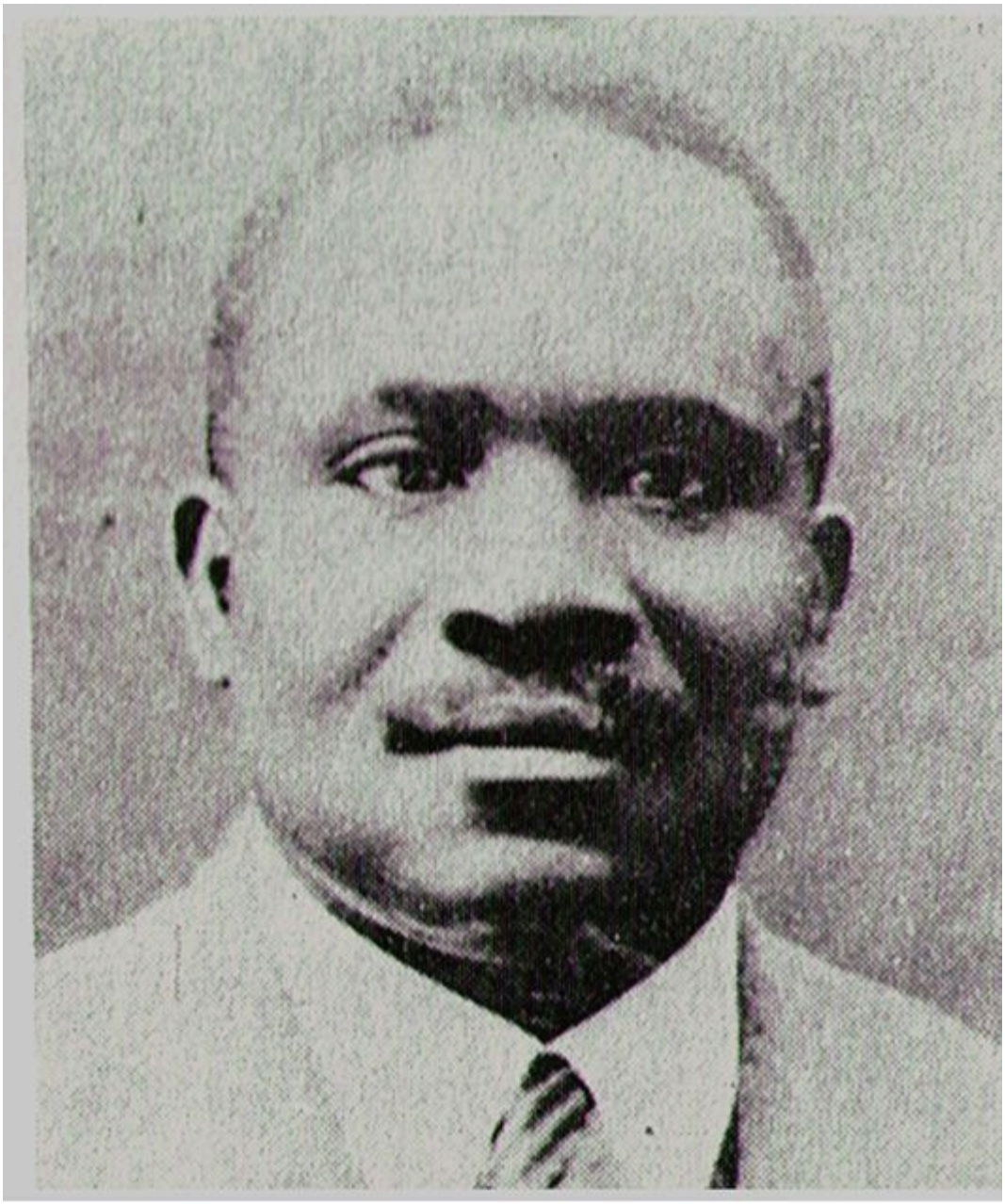
This idea was picked up by the highly influential African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, from where it transmuted into various doctrinal forms, all offering encouragement to independence, and individualism in the African church. To what extent Mathew Zvimba was in tune with the intellectual tenor of this movement is open to question, but his response to white domination of both church and state in the colony was entirely in keeping with the Ethiopianist spirit. He occupied the existing Methodist mission station in his home area and chased away the white missionaries who were stationed there. Then, in August of 1915, he applied to the District Native Commissioner for permission to formalise his church, and uncertain quite what to make of it, the local authorities forwarded the application to the office of the Chief Native Commissioner. One can imagine that heads were scratched as the petition was considered, but in the end, it was concluded from the evidence that Zvimba was an undesirable character, and the application was turned down.

One cannot help but conclude that this was a missed opportunity, but at the same time, nothing like it had happened before, and a rabble-rousing native was something not to be sympathetically regarded. Mathew Zvimba, however, ignored this decision and proceeded to found his church anyway. On two occasions, the District Native Commissioner paid a visit to the Zvimba homestead and warned Mathew in person that the government would not allow him to preach or teach independently, but again the warning had no effect. Word was then circulated throughout the surrounding community that Mathew Zvimba would not be permitted to preach or teach without European supervision and that his church was to be boycotted. It was not, and in fact, it soon established a strong following.

This went on for some time and developed eventually into a standoff. Then, after much official soul-searching, the conclusion was reached that no law had been broken and that the matter was one for internal Wesleyan church discipline. Tensions increased somewhat when the orthodox Christian saints and martyrs were supplanted in the doctrine of the Original Church of the White Bird by a list of heroes from the Zvimba district who had fallen during the Mashona Rebellion. This took the whole business into the realm of politics, which made it easier for the authorities to deal with. Mathew Zvimba was arrested and briefly detained, and although in a generally civil age he suffered no particular harm, and was well treated, it was hoped that the experience would douse his ardour.

In the meanwhile, the District Native Commissioner for Sinoia was summoned to Salisbury where he was interviewed by the Chief Native Commissioner and warned to be extremely careful in how he proceeded. The matter lay within local jurisdiction, of course, but the government was observing closely, and the imperial authorities even closer still. Native affairs was not a central government concern, but nonetheless, the credibility of the Native Department was under the spotlight, and while any heavy-handed treatment of the natives was to be deplored, it was also essential that the natives understand that this sort of thing could not be allowed to pass.

The story is told that the next visit by the District Native Commissioner to the homestead of Mathew Zimba was greeted with formality and respect, but that Mathew Zvimba placed two chairs beside one another, and sat next to the visiting white official as an equal, and not, as protocol demanded, squatting before him. In the end, however, Mathew Zvimba's Original Church of the White Bird died a natural death and soon disappeared altogether. The gravitational pull of the established Wesleyan church in the district proved too strong, and Mathew Zvimba soon afterwards vanished from the stage. The whole episode, however, was very instructive. It served notice on the white establishment that the black man was growing restive under the civilising light of Britannia, and that it was in the church where the first shoots of nationalist politics were beginning to rise. There were some who took notice and sought to broker an accommodation, but a majority of whites carried on regardless, utterly ignorant of even the most fundamental movement of black political aspiration in their midst.



Reverend Thompson Samkange

4
Land and the Native Problem

In the abundance of water, the fool is thirsty – **Bob Marley**

Whatever restrictions and difficulties the emerging black intelligentsia of Southern Rhodesia faced, for the uneducated masses of the countryside, and even for the growing corps of the black working class in the towns and cities, it was the emblematic question of land that lay at the centre of their shared sense of dispossession. As the 1920s progressed, land became as pivotal to the white economy as it was to the black, and under the surface, the steady white appropriation of black land rankled deeply. Again, however, broadly unaware of this, the white settler community carried on regardless, their claim staked on the two simple expedients of conquest and capability. They not only possessed the practical means to take over and hold the land, but they also had the capital and skill to manage it productively.

The generally held white view was that subsistence agriculture was incompatible with progress, and had no place in a modern economy. Apart from the few blacks who adopted modern agricultural methods, and acquired freehold land, the majority had no choice but to accept and work around this philosophy. However, once again, whites were forced to acknowledge that the blacks were in their midst, would not go away, and that their status in the division of spoils required to be formally established, and codified under law.

In 1925, a ground-breaking commission of inquiry, the Carter Commission, published its findings. Chaired by Sir William Morris Carter, the Carter Commission was authorised by the Crown to determine whether a need existed to amend current Southern Rhodesian laws on land tenure. The native reserves as they stood were a hangover from the Jameson era, with only superficial adjustments made between 1914 and 1917. The underlying assumption was that, as the blacks developed into a kind of industrial proletariat, the reserves would eventually become irrelevant, and disappear. This idea, however, pre-supposed that having decided to leave the reserves, blacks would automatically achieve the same rights in the mainstream economy as whites. While this might have been the case in

theory, since no law existed to restrict them from that expectation, in reality, things were very different.

The black community as a whole tended to cling with greater tenacity to their rural heritage than expected, and when they did migrate to the cities, it was usually temporarily, and only for the purpose of work. This was for many reasons, but primarily because whites were, on the whole, unwilling to countenance the long-term or permanent settlement of blacks within the predominantly white towns and cities. As a result, the native reserves evolved from a short-term into a long-term solution, and as such their inadequacies became evident to all.

Questions were asked, for example, about what would happen if blacks did begin to spill out of the reserves, and into the apparently neutral areas on the outside. Would they assimilate into suburban neighbourhoods, buy homes and start businesses? Would they be so audacious as to contemplate moving into white farming areas, or buying into and competing in the agricultural and mining sectors? To limit any possibility that they might, the parameters of black aspiration had to be clearly defined for the benefit of all.

The Carter Commission, therefore, submitted recommendations to the Crown for the division of the country on strictly racial lines. It recommended that out of the seventy-five million acres of land outside the native reserves, a little over forty-eight million should be available for purchase by Europeans only, with just under seven million reserved for purchase by blacks only. The remaining seventeen or so million would theoretically be available for allocation to either race. State and Crown land made up the remainder.

Seven million acres was at that time more than enough to accommodate those few blacks in a position to buy land, so this in itself was not where the problem lay. The problem lay in the fact that white farming areas, as defined by the Carter Commission, included almost the entire central plateau, or the watershed region known as the Highveld. This was not only made up of good, well watered and well-drained soils, but it also gave easy access to the railway. Maps of land delineations from the period strikingly illustrate this fact. The second steeply discriminatory recommendation of the Carter Commission was the inclusion in white zones of every essential urban centre in the colony. This effectively meant that, notwithstanding being ushered into the cities to provide labour, blacks

would never be able to buy or rent homes or business premises in any urban centre.

Both of these recommendations were carefully couched in terms that might have led a casual observer to suppose that they were aimed mainly at protecting blacks from exploitation by whites. It was suggested that without proper control, capital-rich whites would quickly occupy the entire country to the detriment of poor blacks. There was some truth to this, but indeed not the whole truth. As Sir Robert Tredgold, later to be Federal Minister of Justice and Defence, reported in his memoirs, *The Rhodesia That Was My Life*: "I would concede that the legislation was intended to be in the interests of all the inhabitants, black or white, of the colony, but the Europeans had much more to gain from it than the Africans."

Even this was a rather benign view of what was, in practical terms, the first serious article of discriminatory legislation contemplated in the colony. Unsurprisingly, the Imperial Government, duty bound to protect the interests of the natives, agreed with the findings of the Carter Commission and, with very minor adjustments, granted the subsequent Act of Parliament Royal Assent. On 1 April 1931, the 'Land Apportionment Act' was signed into law by Charles Coghlan's successor, Howard Unwin Moffat.[4]

The Land Apportionment Act was to be followed in 1934 by the equally ambiguous 'Industrial Conciliation Act', that sought ostensibly to equalise industrial wages. In other words, black workers were required to be paid the same as white workers if employed for the same job. Again, this might have superficially suggested a measure of protection for black workers, but in reality, it rendered them redundant in the workplace, at least in regards to skilled employment. The reason for this was simply that no white employer would employ a black artisan for the same wages as a white if the latter were available. Since the vast majority of employers in the territory were white, the effect on the skilled black workforce was obvious.

And so it continued, and if by 1933 educated blacks were in any doubt as to the future direction of race relations in Southern Rhodesia, these would soon be dispelled by the manifesto with which Godfrey Huggins would inherit power. The intrigues that saw Huggins take over the office of Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia are outside the scope of this chapter, and for the moment it is just his adoption of the twin pyramid concept of separate development that concerns us.

In Rhodesia, the global depression of the 1930s witnessed the rare phenomenon of unemployment among whites. For the first time in its short history, the colony experienced unskilled and semi-skilled whites resorting to manual labour in a virtual food-for-work programme. Whites lacked the deeply rooted social support network that blacks could rely on, and as a consequence, poverty affected them profoundly. This situation was exacerbated by the emergence of a generation of literate blacks who were prepared to accept less pay for white-collar work. Whites saw this kind of black competition as an infringement on the silent charter that had always guaranteed them better jobs, better pay and better conditions, and they clamoured to see these principals more substantially enshrined. It was to this mood of militant white labour that Huggins responded as the general election of 1933 approached.

By then, the Rhodesia Party had all but collapsed, and Huggins led a weak Reform Party along an uncertain road to power. He was not, in general, a man given to passionate displays or intemperate language, and he articulated his philosophy quietly, allowing those more radical around him to analyse and redefine it as a suitable doctrine. The concept of a twin pyramid system was no more than a refined version of South African apartheid, conceived to ensure separate development while, at the same time, allowing for a certain overlap to assist white industry in its need for labour. The theory was illustrated by the depiction of two equal-sized pyramids. The first was a white pyramid with a black base that it was hoped would become entirely white as a result of continued immigration. The second pyramid was black, representing a society pertaining only to blacks. The idea was for two wholly separate societies to exist without interdependence. For a black man pondering this concept, it would not have been difficult to predict what share of resources would accrue to each pyramid.

Huggins, as an intelligent man, would never have seriously imagined that this plan would work, and it is almost certain that he had no intention of trying to make it work, especially when it became clear to all that white industry would lose its competitive edge if it lost its supply of cheap black labour. By then the two economies were in any case so interdependent that they could never be cleanly separated, even if the genuine will to do so existed. It is nonetheless an indication of how profoundly the race conundrum affected whites that the idea was mooted at

all. Later, more deeply layered legislation would settle white minds, but the Native Problem would never entirely be solved. From the safety of retirement, Huggins would later remark: “What it boiled down to was plain apartheid, with a lot of fancy bits to show how fair and realistic it was. The black and white pyramids were illustrated as being the same size: what was never defined was how far up the black pyramid went before the little white dot that represented real power came and sat on it.”

5
The Moffat Era

In order to get past racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently – **Harry Andrew Blackmun**

As he grew in confidence as a new member of parliament, and a gentleman about town, Godfrey Huggins began to add his opinion to a heated debate that was growing hotter by the day. This was the question of immigration, and lately, it had come to occupy the mind of quite a number of prominent MPs. The end of WWI brought a surge in immigration, and while every white face was welcome in the colony, some were more welcome than others. Rhodes established a very high standard of entry, and for one reason or another, that standard remained in place, and thanks to it, much was unique about Rhodesia.

Southern Rhodesia, in common with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, did not require white labour. Unlike the dominions, whites in southern Africa were heavily outnumbered by blacks, and unlike the aboriginals of Australia or the Americas, black Africans were not killed off by disease or alcohol. The region had labour aplenty and needed white men, and in particular Englishmen of wit and capital to harness cheap land and labour into enterprise and industry. The settler community, therefore, numbering no more than 50,000, was as a consequence somewhat better educated and sophisticated than the average, with many well-bred men among them, and even a handful of aristocrats. The political mood tended to be liberal, and there was a great interest in alerting the natives to the many potentialities of modern life and equipping him to embrace those potentialities with education.

Southern Rhodesia was, in fact, a charming corner of the world, and much of that was thanks to the care taken by the authorities in regards to who they let in and who they did not. A few ner-do-wells were able to slip in with the post-war immigration, and pockets of agricultural Afrikaner escaped attention here and there, but in general, a high standard of Englishman resided in the professions, the civil service and business, and the civic leadership was anxious to keep it that way. At that time it was in fact not particularly difficult to get in. Conditions of entry were merely

capital of £50 and the ability to read and write a European language, which for the purpose of the law included Greek and Yiddish.

An example of the type of man Huggins and the rest were apt to welcome was a twenty-six-year-old Humphrey Gibbs, an urbane minor aristocrat with an Eton and Cambridge pedigree, and a modest amount of money. He bought a piece of land in Nyamandhlovu, north of Bulawayo, and applied his energies to building a farm. Not far behind him came a twenty-three-year-old by the name of Edgar Whitehead, a rather more bookish character, but a man of sinew and character nonetheless, hardened by war, and determined to make a go of it in the colonies. He settled in the pleasant hill country to the west of Umtali and also invested his energy and capital in building an estate. And there were, of course, many others.

It was a tough business, however. While those that availed themselves of cheap land might possess the rare and beautiful gift of Africa, as it was in the 1920s, before the land and the innocence of the native were spoiled, failure was nonetheless common. For every two who arrived, one left. Huggins, however, led a strong caucus in parliament opposed to immigration simply for ‘sentimental’ reasons, or just for the sake of a whiter Rhodesia. He could see no advantage in flooding the colony with impoverished smallholders when the future lay with the big producers. The colony needed public school men, men who had been fagged, flogged and taught how to command. They had the money, they had the breeding, and they had the character.

On the other side of the floor, however, stood a sixty-two-year-old man, thickset, heavy at the shoulder and ample of belly. Although his crown was free of hair, his jowls were thickly clad, and he commanded the floor. His name was Frank Johnson, and the benches fell silent when he spoke. He was the Member for Salisbury South, the working class neighbourhood, and his view of things was somewhat different. God help the man who fagged and flogged him, and with voluble humour, and the lungs of the Bulls of Bashan, he called for a whiter Rhodesia at all costs. There might be a place in the picture for the gentleman farmer, but the future lay in industry, railways and mining, and it would be the practical hands of working men that would build the factories and workshops of the nation.

And so the two sides bickered, and from it, no coherent immigration policy was born, but by one means or another, the standard of immigration remained generally high. Then, quite unexpectedly, Prime Minister Charles

Coghlan died, collapsing one day at the Salisbury Club of a cerebral haemorrhage. For some time he had been ailing, and his affairs were settled in anticipation of death. Politically too he had been struggling to keep his head above water. No particular ideological split existed in the colony, and on the whole, the fortunes of the various political parties depended on the popularity of their leaders, regardless of policy. Coghlan tended to ruffle feathers, and one too many members had been so treated.

The appointment of a successor, by dint of protocol, was the prerogative of the Governor, Lord Chancellor, who duly named Judge Murray Bisset, an esteemed member of the local bench. The presumption of His Majesty's representative to take such a decision, however, provoked a parliamentary rebellion, and Lord Chancellor was painfully singed. The incident has no relevance other than to indicate the independent-mindedness of the Southern Rhodesian body politic, and the lack of real authority in any office of the Crown. Judge Bisset never effectively took office, and it was with the utmost reluctance that Coghlan's deputy, Howard Unwin Moffat, assumed the responsibilities of Prime Minister, settling in for a turbulent and unhappy term.

Moffat, a quiet and self-effacing man, was the only member of the cabinet to support the appointment of Judge Bisset, which was ironic, and rather tragic. Part of the reason that he was so miserably disinclined to step into Coghlan's shoes was simply that he and everyone knew that the founding party was doomed, with or without Coghlan. Another reason was that Moffat manifestly lacked the constitution to lead, and so he tended approached his term with a defeatist attitude and a paralysing pessimism.

Nonetheless, he took the oath of office and led the Rhodesian Party in a general election. This marked the end of the first parliament, and no-one could have been more surprised and dismayed than Moffat himself, when the vote was tallied, to be informed that he had won. The Rhodesia Party lost just four seats, while Labour gained one seat at the expense of the independents, leaving only one independent in the House. Frank Johnson, despite packing halls across the capital, lost his seat, after which he quit the colony and returned home to retirement in Britain.

Howard Moffat's premiership was marked by no particular achievement and might easily have slipped into history unnoticed had it not been for the Land Apportionment Act. The spirit of the Act we have already discussed, and although that spirit might have reflected the mood of his

administration, it reflected neither the attitude nor the character of Howard Moffat himself. Moffat was of missionary heritage, a man of scruple and integrity, and unlike almost every other member of the House, he could count among his friends more than one black man.

Howard Moffat was a grandson of the great Scottish missionary Robert Moffat, born in Kuruman in the Northern Cape in 1869, at one of the earliest and most famous of all southern African missionary institutions. Statutory racism was indeed not the political epitaph that he would have preferred, and not at all what he wished for the colony. However, to comment on his premiership is either not to comment at all, or to comment on the issue of race.

By the end of the 1920s, race had come to occupy a prominent place in the thoughts and attitudes of both white and black in Rhodesia. This corresponded with a similar preoccupation on the part of the Imperial Government, then at a loss as to how a future accommodation between the races could be achieved. In this regard, the British Imperial Government and British settlers overseas tended to look at the same issue from sharply contrasting perspectives. The imperial charter, although informal and unwritten, nonetheless demanded the primacy of African interests at every turn. There had never been any ambiguity about that fact that Africa was African, and that Africans would have it back one day, it was simply that white settler communities across British Africa never imagined that it would come to pass quite so quickly.

The black population of the colony was increasing rapidly, far faster than the white, and left unchecked, whites would soon be overwhelmed. As the first article of race-specific legislation to enter the statute, the Land Apportionment Act was, in the first instance, an acknowledgement of this problem, and in the second an attempt to provide an answer. There were, however, few among whites who realistically imagined that a legal instrument of any sort had the potential to offer a permanent solution.

At that point in history, however, it was not too late to accept the obvious, and the inevitable. There still existed an opportunity to introduce the native elites into government at a grassroots level, to begin the process of creating a tradition of parliamentary exchange, and a grounding in contemporary administration, so that when that day came, power could be transferred as an organic and incremental process. Black society at the point remained receptive, conservative and malleable, and there was some

residual goodwill between the races. The first generation of nominally educated blacks was pushing its children further, and it would not be long before the first doctorate, and masters degrees would return to Rhodesia in black hands. While informal labour movements, social clubs and vigilance societies were already cropping up here and there, they tended to maintain a supplicated posture, believing white rule to be indestructible, at least in that generation. With very few exceptions, the white community took this to mean that tranquillity and a general acceptance of white governance reigned in black society, but this was not the case at all.

Bearing in mind that the power to drive the social agenda lay entirely in white hands, whites were almost wholly ignorant of black society. A handful of native commissioners were bilingual and genuinely interested, but their attitudes were often paternal, and they were seldom receptive to ideas of black advancement. Blacks were employed by the Native Department, but only at a junior departmental level, and the traditional leadership were ranked lower than even the lowliest white native commissioner. The Native Department would in many ways have been the obvious vehicle to test drive a policy like this, but it seems to have never even been considered.

Of the many white immigrants who entered the colony after WWI, a majority moved into the cities, founding the bedrock of white, urban, middle-class society. They moved into commerce, industry, trade and the professions, laying the foundations of the pleasant suburban aspects that came so much to characterise modern Rhodesia. Ensconced thus, however, they did nothing in spirit or kind to reach out to the many blacks who worked for them or watched them from the sidelines. Almost without exception, an immigrant employed a black person or two as a gardener, cook, ‘houseboy’, office messenger, cleaner, ‘teaboy’ or nanny. Few newcomers were interested in learning the native language, and fewer still took the trouble to look at the lives of blacks in the reserves and the burgeoning urban squatter settlements. Most simply tried to replicate their old lives and enjoy the old comforts of home, grafted almost incidentally on to an African landscape.

To the professionals of the Native Affairs Department, trained at the Colonial Institute, the ‘Native Problem’ was not a localised, political question, but rather a broader social issue impacting the British Empire as a whole. The suggestion that a black man might have the capacity to govern

on any level would have been as absurd as proposing that he wear a bowler hat to work and carry the *Times* under his arm. The black man of Rhodesia, like the aborigines of Australia, the natives of New Guinea or the Eskimos of Canada were children of the Empire, for whom the heirs to the British Crown were indefinitely responsible. To even the most sensitive and enlightened of these men, the possibility of majority rule was utterly ludicrous.

No indeed, the officials of the Rhodesian Native Affairs Department thought no differently to their colleagues stationed in fields as diverse Nigeria and Bechuanaland, Uganda and Nyasaland. After the defeat of WWI, Britain was granted a mandate by the League of Nations to govern Germany's lost African colonies. In the Covenant of the League of Nations, this responsibility was described as a 'Sacred Trust'. To British settlers across Africa, this alarming choice of words had an even more disturbing corollary. The premise of these post-war mandates was to: '…nurture and protect peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.'

This marked an abrupt turn in a direction that British African settlers did not necessarily want to follow. A seed of mistrust was sown, as colonials began for the first time to suspect that the metropolitan government was not on their side. In Kenya, in the 1920s, Indians began to agitate for representation. Kenyan Indians, as elsewhere, formed a mercantile class, and as such they were taxpayers, and under the rules of the British Empire, they enjoyed the same access to the franchise as any other British imperial subject. Indian nationalism was gathering strength in India, and the British government was anxious not to add any grist to that particular mill. Realising, however, that granting such rights and liberties to the Indians, who outnumbered whites, would simply turn the government over to Indians, the Colonial Office took the middle ground. In the 1923 session, the Colonial Secretary, Victor Cavendish, the 9th Duke of Devonshire, and serving Colonial Secretary, addressed the Commons over this question of Indian status in Kenya.

> Primarily Kenya is an African territory, and His Majesty's Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be paramount and that if, and when, those interests and the interests of the immigrant

> races should conflict, the former should prevail. Obviously, the interests of the other communities, European, Indian or Arab, must severally be safeguarded, but in the administration of Kenya, His Majesty's Government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, and they are unable to delegate or share this trust, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races.

When finally it reached the overseas press, this statement sent a collective shudder down the spine of colonial Africa and set in motion one of many revivals of the question of a grand amalgamation of British colonies in Africa. This, of course, was for the sake of safety in numbers, and in a different age, it might have been taken seriously. The age of the Sacred Trust, however, was the age of devolution, and while a generation or more remained before the implementation of any such policies on the ground, this was certainly the direction defined by the various concerned metropolitan departments. There was, however, considerable interest expressed in the colonies themselves for some sort of an amalgamation, and rather than refuse outright, the Imperial Government opted for the venerable strategy of a commission of inquiry.

While this was just yet another commission of inquiry, it was perhaps more interesting than most because, while its central mandate remained to examine the potential of a union of African colonies, it was never seriously imagined that one would arise. Instead, it aligned itself to investigate and report upon the Sacred Trust itself. The commission was constituted in 1927, under the chairmanship of Privy Councillor and Member for Norwich, Sir Edward Hilton Young, and including Sir George Schuster, educationist and financial advisor to the Indian Government, and Joseph Houldsworth Oldham, Secretary of the International Missionary Council.

The findings of the Hilton Young Commission were not made public until 1929, and these, unsurprisingly, proved to be another disappointment to the settler communities. While recommending a central authority of some sort for Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, it was concluded in the end that this group of territories did not have sufficient communication with the two Rhodesias or Nyasaland for all six to be included in a single union. It went on to give separate consideration to the possibility of a closer union

between the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, but found against such a proposal, because the centre of authority for an amalgamation of those three would naturally be Salisbury. It was felt that it would be unwise to recommend that any new areas containing a large black population be put under the government of Southern Rhodesia until that administration had demonstrated its ability to cope with the complex race problems that it already confronted.

So much for a union of British colonies, but over the broader question, what commonality could there possibly be? How could the aspirations of a large population of blacks groping towards civilisation possibly be reconciled to a smaller white population manifestly already enjoying the rewards of civilisation? The Hilton Young Commission attempted to provide the answer. That one part of the community should govern the whole, or that one class should make laws for another was deemed fundamentally unacceptable. As articulated by African American writer and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, with Ulster in mind: “Protestants are excellent people, but it would not be wise for Catholics to depend entirely on them to look after their rights and interests”.

According to the Hilton Young Commission, the foundation and only sure defence of freedom lay in a proper balance of interests and powers in the State. In the future, settler capital and expertise was to be regarded solely in the context of its ability to develop native potential. White political domination would be tolerated only for so long as it served to bring the blacks forward sufficiently to assume their full share of government. The standard argument against this – that without European oversight civilisation could not exist at all in Africa was rejected. Ultimately, a minority government could only be tenable if it was built on the rule of justice, and if it had the support and loyalty of the majority. So long as the systems of government in the settler colonies rested not on consent, but on privilege, they could not be indefinitely supported.

The imperial solution was what came to be known as the ‘Dual Mandate’. Insofar as it was to be applied to south and south-central Africa, the Dual Mandate was simply racial segregation. Both racial groups would be encouraged to develop their own self-governing institutions in their own separate areas, all under the broad superintendentship of the Imperial Government. Pivotal to the success of such a policy was the understanding that overall authority would remain vested in the Crown until majority rule

was deemed possible. Implicit was the fact that the white minority could never aspire to independence under the current form of administration. It seemed at the time that the Hilton Young Commission envisaged equal power sharing, but the obvious reality was that this also represented intrinsic and unequal privilege. However, it went on to allude to the hope that if this dual policy could be followed to its natural conclusion, it would be:

"…only a question of time before the natives will have to be admitted to a share in the whole government which fairly balances that accorded to the immigrant communities. If white and black can someday meet on equal terms, intellectually, socially and economically, the racial and economic antagonisms may be merged in a community of interests which will admit of some form of free representative government."

This, then, was the blueprint for racial cohabitation, and the British Government expected its dependencies in Africa to adopt it if they hoped for any kind of future on the continent. Then, in June 1930, as this new vision of an egalitarian African society was sinking in, the white settlers of Africa were dealt a second blow. The new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Passfield, a prominent social reformer and member of the Fabian Society, twisted the knife a little harder by publishing on behalf of the Colonial Office a paper he called 'Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa'. This document cut to the quick of the Southern Rhodesian race dilemma, announcing that certain experiments in land equality were to be tried in the Northern Rhodesia Protectorate whereby, in the disposal of Crown lands, there would be an opportunity for acquisition without regard to race, colour or religion. The native in Northern Rhodesia was to be "effectively and economically free to work, in accordance with his own wish, either in production in the reserves or as an individual producer upon his own plot of land, or in employment for wages." In layman's terms, this meant that black advancement was to be considered the first priority of any future race policy in the protectorate.

All this stung Southern Rhodesian whites deeply. Foremost they felt that the Hilton Young Commission had deliberately slighted a native policy that most in the country felt was making great strides, and to such criticism, they had a ready answer. In Southern Rhodesia, the framework of a dual race policy had in fact been in place since the turn of the century. The 1894 and 1898 Orders in Council both clearly stressed the right of blacks to fair

and equitable land wherein ‘native law’ would apply. The appointment of a Secretary for Native Affairs, whose activities were subject to the imperial veto, was also in keeping with the perceived need for a separate system of government for blacks. Furthermore, the Land Apportionment Act defined clearly the separate areas that both white and black would occupy. Why then was Southern Rhodesian race policy singled out for such obloquy?

There was another side to the picture, however, and this might best be expressed in a comment attributed to a Native Affairs official of this period, a certain N.H. Wilson. “We are in the country because we represent a higher civilisation because we are better men. It is our only excuse for having taken the land. For us to turn round now and ask the natives to help us in directing the government of ourselves is ridiculous.”

The primary motivation for separate development, therefore, would appear not to be to nurture the capacity of the black man to govern, but to keep him at arm's length, temporarily in principal but permanently if at all possible. Beyond this, most whites in Southern Rhodesia were willing to be as pragmatic as necessary, so long as the final solution did not affect their enjoyment of the ‘Rhodesian Way of Life’. At all costs, the higher standards of white civilisation spliced onto the African landscape should be allowed to grow and prosper without hindrance. However, in the absence of permanent white supervision, there were precious few whites who held out much hope for that.

So much for the political anxieties associated with black political advancement in southern Africa, but a more visceral and elemental fear lay somewhat closer to the hearth. In between the white and black populations of Southern Rhodesia, occupying a shady hinterland of disavowal and denial, existed the coloureds and half-castes who were inevitable by-products of early frontier life. If one can picture the rigidity of race consciousness, prevalent in both white and black society at that time, it is not difficult then to understand the depth of emotion generated by this particular dilemma.

In the early years of the territory, coloureds and half-castes, although both of mixed blood, were regarded as distinct from one another. Coloureds tended to be those of South African origin who had followed in the footsteps of the Pioneer Column, and in whose veins ran a mixture of all the races of the Cape. Half-castes, on the other hand, were the direct product of casual or permanent liaisons between local women and pioneer

men. In the order of things, Cape Coloureds existed as a consequence of past indiscretions, perpetrated elsewhere, and as such, they presented no particular threat. They were found to be competent in the lower trades, and thus provided an early stopgap while indigenous labour remained unavailable. Half-castes, on the other hand, usually existed as isolated individuals living with their black mothers in kraals, villages or labour compounds. They did not fit into the commonly understood doctrines of racial purity, and as such, they presented the administration with a unique conundrum.

The coloured population grew as a consequence of continued immigration and natural increase within their community, which in itself did not unduly perturb local officialdom. If coloured people posed any problem, this tended to be in the matter of assigning them social status. The difficulty in this lay in the fact that a class of poor whites existed in urban areas who tended to live in close commerce with coloureds and who openly mingled with them. The number of whites who, through misfortune, alcohol, low mental capacity or poor judgement, had come to be regarded as coloured, roughly equalled those coloureds who by dint of their industry, prosperity and light skin colour had come to be regarded as white. Coloureds were as anxious to be classified white as whites were not to be categorised as coloured. In this issue the stakes were high. The social advancement gained by a coloured individual or family, upon being classified as white, was as immeasurable as the devastation suffered by an ostensibly white family being classified as coloured. For a white child to be marked as coloured and assigned to a non-white school was a life-scarring catastrophe for both the child and its parents.

Not surprisingly then, instances of confusion and crossover were widespread. This happened because of pale skinned coloureds, dark-skinned whites and the notoriously haphazard methods employed to determine who was who. It could be the nap of the hair, the width and dimension of the nose or the fullness of the lips. Classification was most rigorously applied in schools, where the decision of whether a child was white or coloured was usually left to individual school committees. Evidence that a family mixed socially, for example, or associated closely with coloureds, could be taken as proof that the children of the family were coloured, and if one or other of the parents was deemed coloured, it might not matter how Caucasian in appearance a child was. It often occurred that one child from a particular

family would be accepted into a white school and another excluded. Neither was it uncommon for a child to be classified as white, then re-classified as coloured at adolescence, only to be white again as an adult. The exclusion of coloureds from white schools was reflected in the exclusion of blacks from coloured schools. An outcry might be expected from parents in either case, apprehensive that their own contagion not be overstated, and anxious also that their children be placed as high up the race ladder as their complexion permitted.

An interesting case was that of Grace Maggio who lived in the Ardbennie industrial suburb of Salisbury where many coloured families lived. Grace attended Parktown white school, but was identified by her classmates as coloured and as such was ostracised. Her mother admitted to the school authorities that her grandparents were Cape Coloured, but was quick to point out that her husband was classified white and was serving in the armed forces as a European. It was decided after much soul-searching that Grace was racially suspect. She was duly removed from Parktown and offered an alternative place in a coloured school. Mrs Maggio appealed to the Director of Education but was told that in the interests of the child herself, whose life at a white school would clearly be unbearable, the decision could not be reversed. Mrs Maggio would not accept this and Grace was taken out of school altogether.

An official census published in 1930 revealed that the coloured population of the colony numbered upwards of 3,000 individuals. Much of this increase, however, had latterly been due to the absorption of first-generation half-castes moving into the towns, creating a problem of somewhat higher visibility than hitherto. It was the Moffat government, and Moffat himself, who found himself with the unenviable responsibility of dealing publicly with what promised to be a thorny issue. To get an idea just how prickly a problem it was, one need only observe the comments of Moffat's Chief Native Commissioner, Charles Bullock. Bullock noted that hybridisation, however gradual, could not be contemplated with equanimity. It was deemed appropriate that each race should develop (and be given full opportunities to develop) according to the potentialities that lay within its biological inheritance.

Bullock was not alone in expressing concern for what was increasingly being seen as a social disease. The growing presence of mixed-race people in the cities, their ambiguous placement in the racial order, their

grim squatter settlements and their tendency to draw in the less desirable half-caste element, brought the issue very much to the fore of social debate. The threat that a mixed blood community presented to white society was ill-defined, and naturally had greater moral overtones than political, and the phenomenon was condemned almost as widely as it was practised.

When the Land Apportionment Act divided society into cultural zones, the coloureds were neither acknowledged nor offered any specific cantonments of their own. They found themselves equally segregated from both black and white with no quarter being provided by either. They were established in shanty settlements in all of the main towns, with the most significant concentrations in and around Bulawayo. They were subject to the same petty racism as blacks, and their mobility and aspirations were limited in precisely the same way. When it came to facilities such as hospitals, prisons and schools, they were lumped in with blacks, which offended them as much as it did blacks. They were not black and did not mix freely with blacks, but there was literally no place for them in contemporary Rhodesian society.

While the coloured community was maligned, it was not lost on those of clean conscience that it was the symptom and not the disease. As early as 1910, the police began collecting information on miscegenation. As data was compared, it was noted with some relief that the main offenders tended to be Greek and Jewish shopkeepers, of whom three main types were identified. There was, in the first instance, the minority who cohabited openly with black women, then a more significant number who regularly visited women in their huts and finally a majority who made regular and covert use of local black prostitutes.

The first group was obviously regarded as the most dangerous, because of the frankness of their behaviour and the number of children they produced. While casual fraternisation was not openly encouraged, it was accepted, especially in the countryside. Relationships of a settled nature, however, were not to be so liberally tolerated. Since miscegenation between white men and black women was not illegal, there was nothing specific that could be done, although the police and Native Affairs officials were not above subjecting offenders to petty victimisation. Mixed race marriages required the consent of the Director of Native Affairs, which gave officials of the Department ample opportunity to make their prejudices known. As

part of an obligatory period of reflection, such men were often subjected to enormous pressure to reconsider, which in the end many did.

Then, from about 1914 onwards, the Native Affairs Department required that all headmen keep a list of white men known to be interfering with local women and another of all mixed-race births. Much thought, indeed, was given to the fate of half-caste children still living as natives in the tribal areas, who by 1930 were thought to number about 700 individuals under the age of fifteen. Local women's groups were the first to bring the situation to the attention of the government, campaigning vigorously for laws that would force white fathers to acknowledge and accept responsibility for their illegitimate half-caste progeny. It goes without saying that this met with stiff resistance from a male-dominated cabinet and assembly, for legislation to limit or ban miscegenation, or any type of pressure to compel white men to own up would expose some highly placed in Rhodesian society to public ridicule, the threat of blackmail or both.

While it was careful to point no fingers, the government was prepared to acknowledge the problem up to a point. Moffat, in particular, pressed for action to rescue half-caste children from, as he put it, being thrust back into the lower culture of their mother's people. He believed, as did many others, that white genetic material, no matter how degenerate was still superior to any other, and as a matter of conscience, its product had to be acknowledged.

After much hand-wringing and nervous backward glances, the best that the government could muster was a tepid series of guidelines. Where a half-caste child lived in a family with mixed race parents, the government did not interfere. Where the father was estranged, however, the child in almost every case lived with its black mother, and a policy of removal was tried before in due course it was lost in a maze of official obfuscation. Only a handful of children were ultimately institutionalised under Christian care, where they grew up with European values.

Moffat then proposed founding separate schools and orphanages specifically for half-caste children. However, the costs involved, and the denial factor prevalent in the male establishment, saw the suggestion fudged, and in the end, swept under the carpet. There was a strong feeling in government that creating institutions specifically for coloured people would necessitate the acknowledgement of a third racial group, that would further complicate an already tangled race landscape. It is understandable

that any public discussion on the question of miscegenation was apt to make legislators very uncomfortable, for many were rural men themselves, and it was entirely possible that if the light became too searching, it would shine on more than just Greeks and Jews.

So it was that children who were ‘rescued’ from black environments tended to be dealt with on an informal basis that dispensed with the need for any overt acknowledgement. The criterion was the attitude of the father, and not necessarily the condition of the child. If a father wished to have the child removed from its mother’s care, it was. After that, the mother would play no further part in nurturing the child, and obviously would be encouraged never to see it again. Any legislation on the table, however, tended to remain there while the office of the Attorney General pondered the problem of an acceptable definition for miscegenation. Years went by with no new laws drafted, and in the end, the simplest solution seemed to be not to awaken any differences in the minds of half-caste children at all, and to allow them to be naturally absorbed into black society. The policy, therefore, was no policy at all. If a father chose to intervene, he did so at his own peril, and as a consequence few did.

In time, coloureds and half-castes established a separate identity and found a niche in industry where they formed a socio-economic stratum entirely of their own. They thrived on their status as social pariahs, creating both a vernacular unique to themselves and an outlook on life that was as colourful as it was irrepressible. White concerns that coloured communities were both vice-ridden and violent were quite often justified. This, however, merely added to a general atmosphere of mischief and humour that surrounded coloureds, and that, paradoxically, endeared them to many whites. Politically, coloureds tended to veer to the right, but this was mainly as a consequence of contempt for blacks rather than any love of whites. In time the coloureds became an accepted part of the troubled racial dynamic of Rhodesia, although their acceptance has never been without a strain of poignant regret.

Much closer to home was the complicated relationship that whites had with their domestic servants. An almost obsessive determination on the part of white immigrants to make use of this most colonial of privileges was born out of two factors. The first, of course, was that indefatigable British preoccupation with class, and the fact that arrival in the upper-middle classes was best defined by the maintenance of domestic service. This ideal

was imported to the colonies, where it was suddenly available to just about anyone with white skin. For the first time in their lives, British working class immigrants were in a position to look down on another social group, and they did. Each European household on average employed two domestic servants, and while some would have more, there were very few that had none.

The second factor was that the prestige of keeping domestic servants became inverted to imply that, if a white family did not have servants, then they were living in a state of poverty. Therefore, even when the direst economic circumstances prevailed, at least one servant would be retained in a white household for no better reason than to keep up appearances.

By the 1930s, domestic service had come to define a large part of the celebrated Rhodesian way of life. White women were liberated from basic housework, which made the isolation of their frontier lives a great deal more bearable. The colonial lifestyle also meant suburban living on a grand scale, characterised by large houses and extensive holdings. In time, Rhodesian flower gardens were celebrated throughout the Empire. Expansive properties, spacious homes and extensive sporting facilities were but a few of the many luxuries that could never have been possible without cheap and willing domestic labour.

However, domestic service was governed by the strictest rules of propriety. In the 1950s, a set of Federal guidelines for new immigrants included instructions to housewives without the experience of employing male servants. They were cautioned, for example, never to allow their female children to exhibit any degree of nakedness, and for themselves to make their own beds, wash their own underwear and avoid appearing in a state of casual undress. This implied that women and female children were at some sort of risk at the hands of male servants, and in theory, this should have been so, for according to the census of 1911 over 6,000 African men were living in Salisbury, but only 300 women. It was not inconceivable, then, that a lonely black man far from his home might be tempted by this most forbidden fruit. However, statistics tend not to bear this out, and incidents of rape or indecent conduct, although they occurred, were rare. Nonetheless, under the ‘Immorality Suppression Ordinance Acts’ of 1903 and 1916, an act of indecency, as applied to a black man, included raising or opening any window, blind, screen or the fly of a privy to observe any

woman nude or semi-nude. This was later expanded to include voyeurism, flirtation and even friendships.

Nonetheless, whatever mutual complicity, suspicion or risks might have characterised the relationships between master and servant, it was in this quarter that the only real contact between the races took place. Social convention forbade any shared interaction, and even those men who married or cohabitated with black women tended to do so in a condition of concubinage and chattel rather than in monogamy. Thus, the general view that each race held of the other tended to be formed primarily at this point of contact.

Gertrude Page, who authored such Rhodesian classics as *The Rhodesian* and *Winding Paths*, wrote of a black house servant being beaten for wiping his nose on a tea towel. It is probable that incidents like this did occur, but they were certainly rare, and never institutionalised. Doris Lessing in her novel *The Grass is Singing* went to some length to portray the unlikely tyranny of an unschooled white mistress against her black servant. Author Hylda Richards, in her portrayal of early farm life in Rhodesia, draws more on the humour of mutual misunderstanding than the usual attempts to depict blacks as nose-picking, belly-rubbing imbeciles or white housewives as bullies and tyrants.

“In this way,” she wrote, “I came upon darkest Africa, [and] the ignorance, natural and acquired, of the African native. My hope of being the beloved mistress of devoted slaves received a nasty shock. Like all newcomers, I tried to spoil them so they would love me, but they just took advantage of my kindness and made incredible demands.”

Far from ruling with an iron fist, Hylda Richards found it impossible to make an impact on her servants at all. A black male’s disinclination to be bossed around by a woman of any colour found expression in many ways. Theft, indifference, lies, evasions and dumb insolence were all weapons in a domestic servant’s arsenal. To deliberately lay sauce and pickles for breakfast and marmalade for dinner, to sweep around things and to give notice the moment he realises he cannot adequately train his mistress, all of these things drove the inexperienced Hylda Richards to distraction.

“Only the years show one how to cope with a native servant so that during the first day of office one knows which brand they are; the intelligent, quick boy who will, later on, use that intelligence for evading

work, or the apparent idiot who may, with patience, become a strict routiner."

Most labour, be it domestic, industrial or agricultural, was migrant, and as a consequence, a kaleidoscope of different languages and cultures merged in the workplace. Sir Granville Orde-Brown, who was at the turn of the century the undisputed Empire expert on race and race relations, remarked on the subject:

"It is easy to hear a camp-fire conversation in the Congo during which conditions in the Union, Rhodesia, Tanganyika and Angola are all discussed and commented upon. Brothers from Nyasaland may go one to the north and the other to the south, and may be trusted to compare their experiences on their return home."

A language unique to migrant labour evolved which came to be known as *eChilapalapa*, or more commonly 'Kitchen Kaffir'. Chilapalapa was a pidgin language combining the common elements of some native dialects with occasional flourishes of English and Afrikaans. It developed initially on the Witwatersrand mines under the name *Fanagalo*, and it convinced whites that they could speak a native language entirely as it did blacks that they could speak English. In time, however, it became the *lingua franca* of the workplace and was widely spoken throughout the Rhodesias and beyond. Hylda Richards makes a record of an amusing conversation in Chilapalapa as she tried to explain to her 'boss boy' the causes of World War II.

"*Manjie* (now) *lo* Germeni tells *lo* Austria, *Mina bamba wena!* (I catch you) and *lo* Austria say, *Aikona!* (No you won't) And *lo* English tells *lo* Germeni *aikona enza so!* (Don't do that!) *Manjie lo* Germeni *bambele* (Beat up) *lo* Austria." And so the conversation continued until it ended with the native gaining the gist of the story with the conclusion. "Uh, uh! *Lo* Germeni *meninge* (very) cheeky!"

Migrant labour, indeed, was yet another of those strange anomalies of Southern Rhodesian race relations. While the Carter Commission and the subsequent Land Apportionment Act institutionalised a strictly separate system of development, all kinds of efforts were made to improve conditions in the reserves to make it less attractive for young males to leave in search of work. However, the counteractive imposition of hut taxes and the increasing demands for labour conspired to ensure that they did. Migrant labour had many different levels depending on its source, but since

cities and towns were to remain white areas, all labour to some degree could be considered migratory.

There was internal labour migration from the reserves to the cities, and a more regional movement that often saw labour originating in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland flooding into the Copperbelt, into Southern Rhodesia and in vast numbers further south to the Witwatersrand. The 1930s brought large-scale industrial development, not only in Southern Rhodesia but to the north as well, creating a massive demand for labour. An entire industry developed around the movement and procurement of labour, involving private recruiting agents and modern transport networks, as well as comfortable rest stations along the most travelled routes.

The social cost to men and their families of long-distance migration was, of course, enormous. In the early days, tribesmen were torn away from their traditional life to work for enough money to pay their hut taxes, after which they would return to their lands and their families. By the 1930s, however, such attitudes had changed. The rise of mining, agriculture and industry in both Rhodesias rapidly undermined traditional styles of life by depopulating tribal areas of young and productive males. The wearisome journeys home, and the material demands of kinfolk when they arrived caused many to abandon their home areas altogether for more modern lives in labour compounds and other fringe urban settlements. Many took wives or concubines from tribes different from their own, and in due course discarded old tribal attachments for the new, integrated industrial generation of working blacks.

Rates of pay in Southern Rhodesia were higher than those in the north, and at that time, with a great deal more freedom of movement than now, many would travel considerable distances to find suitable work. Large numbers of Nyasas moved south from the Shire Highlands and the ‘dead north’ of Nyasaland to find work in the cities and settlements of Southern Rhodesia. Thus, a labour caste system evolved with specific groups preferring or being preferred for certain types of work.

The removal of night soil from privies throughout Salisbury, for example, was the preserve of Tongas from the Zambezi Valley. Lawyer Hardwicke Holderness relates in his memoir the story of an amateur Shakespearean practising her lines in the privy that backed up against a sanitary lane in Salisbury. “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?”

she keened, whereupon a crisp reply emerged from behind her. "*Mina aikona* Romeo, Madam, *mina* Zambezi boy!"

Kingsley Fairbridge recorded the sight of gangs of Mozambican migrant workers slaving on the preparatory work for the new township of Umtali.

"Great gangs of boys from Nyungwe (Tete) and Senna were working on the streets that were to be. *Mabandawi* and *Magorongoza* dug side by side, trenching the two streams that flanked the township; the deadly mud, packed with germs of malaria, was cast up beside the trenches."

Before World War I, Mozambican and Nyasa farm workers often followed white farmers down from Nyasaland to settle in Southern Rhodesia, which served, incidentally, to introduce local white farmers to the superior work ethic of the Nyasa. Thereafter they tended to select Nyasas and northern Mozambicans for farm work in preference to whatever local labour was available.

While these bewildering crosscurrents of labour movement and the rapid merging of communities became a feature of the post-war period, the phenomenon began to diminish as the global depression of the 1930s made itself felt. The labour recruitment industry and its dispersed infrastructure fell away and was never quite revived. Migrant labour, of course, continued to flow, but it became victim to tighter political controls and covetous practices of governments jealous of their individual labour reserves.

It is also true that ideas of nationalism and black political consciousness were carried along the various routes of migration. The main detractors of political amalgamation, for example, tended to be black, with many of their concerns bound up in fear of competition with labour from distant areas. As Nyasaland pioneered the migrant labour movement, so Nyasas brought back and disseminated the early breezes of revolution. Political consciousness travelled along a system of verbal arteries that ran from the Witwatersrand to Katanga, and beyond.

And so it was that Howard Moffat found himself as the uncomfortable heir to a government charged with the task of regulating this disordered race landscape. While this was not all that contributed to the aura of failure that tends to hang over his administration, it represents much of what ultimately brought it down. Moffat was of missionary heritage, and in his blood was the mighty social conscience of his forbears. It must,

therefore, have been particularly challenging to be the hand that consigned the black man to a social and political wasteland. In many ways, it was Godfrey Huggins and not Moffat who seemed born to the tasks of this time. From the backbenches, he contributed much of the momentum that steered the colony along the road that it must ultimately follow. Moffat went through the motions and completed his term, but he was not dismayed in the slightest when the day came for him to hand over power to Huggins.

Bulawayo Railway Station

6
A Rhodesian Hero and the Golden Years

A small European colonial class, driven to extreme precautions in defence of its position, has tended to view with more than usual reluctance any advance by the African towards claiming equal rights and privileges with themselves – **N.D. Atkinson**

By 1931, the global depression was upon southern Africa, and real hardship had begun to bite into the lives of the farming and working classes of Rhodesia. Apart from adding yet more poison to Howard Moffat's chalice, the sudden economic decline caused a sharp drop in tax revenues, and while the treasury pruned expenditure back as far as it could, Percy Fynn was eventually driven to suggest civil service wage cuts. Although a desperate measure, it was also hoped that this would be reasonably safe since the civil service was bound into government policy, and as such, it was the constituency least likely to fight back. Fynn, however, appeared to have forgotten that the civil service constituency belonged to Huggins, and although he may have publicly eschewed any political ambition this was beggared by the alacrity with which he seized this opportunity to do battle.

Since civil service wages were protected by a reserve clause of the constitution, a two-thirds majority was necessary for a bill to pass that proposed any alteration. After a handful of defections, Moffat's Rhodesia Party found that it had twenty members against the combined opposition of the Reform, Progressive and Labour parties holding nine. The speaker made up the total of thirty, and so the governing party required the support of all its members, which put Huggins in a very difficult position. As a Rhodesia Party MP, if he supported the interests of his constituency, it would by necessity inflict a defeat on his party, and if he did that, it would be nothing less than a vote of no confidence, requiring a general election to resolve. On the other hand, if he supported his constituency, he would be failing his party.

Making the best of it, Huggins voted in favour of the Civil Service Wage Bill, but then immediately expressed his displeasure by crossing the floor. How his constituents would react to this, however, would decide whether he would take another step forward in politics or two steps back to his surgery. In the event, he held a meeting of his constituents in Milton

Park that turned out to be a vintage Huggins performance. After a half hour or so at the podium his audience was rolling in the aisles, at which point a flawlessly timed offer to resign his parliamentary seat was howled down, and his back was slapped all the way out the door. He returned thus to the backbenches as an independent, keeping his mouth shut for the time being, and watching as events played out.

Rhodesian politics began as more or less a one-party system, which was both necessary and commendable at the time, but now the moment seemed appropriate for the establishment of a viable opposition. Members of Parliament typically put aside their differences at the close of business, when they all trooped across the road to the Salisbury Club, and this was indeed the case on this occasion. Around the gentleman's bar, it was decided that the current opposition, comprising the Reform and Progressive Parties, would unite with a smaller group called the Country Party to form a united opposition under the banner of the 'Reform Party'. At the first party conference, held in Gwelo in 1932, Godfrey Huggins was elected to the leadership.

A few months later a general election was held, and with the moderation of a born gentleman, Huggins lunged for Moffat's jugular. Of the two issues Huggins chose to campaign on, the first was a sure winner since it involved slating the British South Africa Company. The question was the monopoly held by the Company over the mineral rights in the colony, a hangover from the Rudd Concession. The genius of it, however, was that Company ownership of the mineral rights of Southern Rhodesia was enshrined in the Constitution, so the government of Southern Rhodesia had absolutely no legal say in the matter, and as a consequence, it was an issue that Moffat could neither deflect nor reasonably argue.

The second issue was race, and as we have heard, race was a complicated and visceral matter that continued to paralyse the settler community with irrational fear. With white Rhodesian men for the first time taking up picks and shovels, the issue of the rights of white workers had become nothing less than incendiary. Huggins proposed his twin pyramid scheme, thus becoming the first politician to introduce race and segregation as a direct campaign issue. White workers naturally blamed the government for unemployment and railed against increasing black competition for the lower paid jobs. Huggins, although the absolute antithesis of a working man, embraced the issue, and the working classes embraced him.

Over the question of mineral rights, Huggins whipped up a storm. He was prepared to concede that the Company owned the railways, and if the Board wished to sell it when the day came, they were at liberty to do so. The mineral rights, however, were an asset of the colony, and should, therefore, be made over to the people. Moffat entered the ring rather forlornly by asking the Company if it would submit the matter to the judicial committee of the Privy Council, which, after a collective shudder, the Board of Directors declined to consider. The Company stood on solid legal ground, and everybody knew it. However, along with the rest of the world, it was short of liquid capital, so it offered to sell out its rights for £2 million.

This was a very reasonable figure, and on 1 April 1933, somewhat to his surprise, Moffat brokered a deal. This, in all fairness, should have won him the gratitude of the nation, since he acquired on behalf of the colony a valuable financial asset that would in future realise an enormous return. However, led by Huggins, he was howled down in Parliament for selling out, and paying through the nose for what belonged to the colony anyway. Howard Moffat wilted, and now widely regarded as a liability to his party he resigned in favour of his Minister of Mines, George Mitchell.

An interesting little side point here is that the ‘Ministerial Titles Act’ had been adopted during the previous parliamentary session, which exchanged the title ‘Premier’ to that of ‘Prime Minister’, although the two had always been interchangeable. The effect of it, however, was that George Mitchell became the first and shortest serving Prime Minister in Rhodesian history.

Huggins, in the meanwhile, was apt to congratulate himself on a job well done, and he did, and as Moffat slunk off gratefully into the wings, he stepped seamlessly into pole position. Although he lacked establishment support, he could count on the working class and civil service votes, and he was quite confident that would be enough. The general election was held in September of 1933, and the Reform Party did indeed slip in with a slim but useful majority. Huggins was sworn in as Prime Minister, beginning his term as the longest serving Prime Minister in British history.

In many respects, Huggins arrived on the stage at the perfect moment. Life in Southern Rhodesia in the 1930s was not entirely devoted to survival on a crippled economic landscape and machinations to grind the black man underfoot. As the roaring twenties plunged into depression, a

golden age of verve and creativity grew out of adversity. Salisbury, like most colonial capitals, managed to squeeze a third generation out of the Victorian Era, and the combination of good medicine, an established white society, a sporting country and an excellent climate made the Rhodesian experience one of the most pleasant of the imperial age. A virgin country, its natural beauty as yet unspoilt, lay wide open to any white man or woman who cared to make the most of it. Every international frontier between Cape Town and Nairobi was administered by a white man, and the territories in between were neither over-armed nor under-policed. Indeed, the English speaking races enjoyed absolute primacy in south, east and central Africa, and they certainly did make the most of it.

While the elite social network of Salisbury remained centred around Government House, in the adjacent avenues, those with money and position built their signature brick and iron houses, with stern gables, wide verandas and generous acreages of tended garden. The most sought-after properties were those that offered a glimpse of the Governor's gables, although Avondale, Newlands and Hillside were fast emerging as desirable suburbs. The *crème de la crème,* including civil servants, senior judges and wealthy industrial and professional men, resided for the most part on North Avenue. Their houses were gracious, expansive and practical. The rooms boasted high pressed ceilings, bay windows and ornamental fireplaces. Wide staircases with rich hardwood balustrades led from the arched hallways to spacious upstairs bedrooms. Gardens were pleasantly lawned and shaded with expansive figs or *syringa*, or a line of jacarandas to carpet jaded winter beds with a misting of mauve. The elite wore evening dress to the cinema, and arm-length gloves were *de rigueur* for the ladies. Card dropping and other quaint Victorian or Edwardian traditions lingered on, and coattails and couturier gowns were ubiquitous at the annual show ball. It was imperial England lingering under the gossamer sunshine of good times and plenty.

Among those determined to hang onto the last fading traces of Victorian gentility was the young and energetic wife of Sir Cecil Hunter Rodwell, Governor of Southern Rhodesia from 1928 to 1934. Sir Cecil had by then worked his way through one or two remote and charming postings, including the Pitcairn Islands, British Guiana and Fiji, and Southern Rhodesia certainly was an agreeable valediction to a respectable gubernatorial career. Lady Rodwell, however, many years his junior, sat relatively lowly in the hierarchy of governor's wives. The two met in South

Africa some years earlier, while she was touring in the cast of ‘Miss Hook Of Holland’, and after a courtship of conspicuously short duration, they were married. Although naturally reluctant to openly accommodate a chorus girl, the ladies of Salisbury north nonetheless did what they could to compromise.

Lady Rodwell was a lithe, well-formed woman of gypsey aspects and unfinished manners. After her marriage, she maintained her keen interest in the theatre, staging a handful of amateur productions, including Alice in Wonderland, which, incidentally, featured most of her family in the cast. Leading the local bridge set, and in keeping with an opaque background, she fleeced the newcomers and raised many an eyebrow over points of sharp practice. She was popular, however, in particular among the small community of local thespians, the first authentic member of which was a certain Christine Collings.

Daughter of a wealthy mining engineer, Ms Collings studied drama and dance in London before returning to Rhodesia, keen to exhibit her achievements. Through Lady Rodwell, she met a young physician from Shanghai, Doctor Paul Anning, who also happened to be a keen amateur dramatist. The two soon tired of Lady Rowell’s rather gay view of drama and set about founding a serious stage movement, which later became the Salisbury Repertory Players or ‘Reps’. On Tuesday 17 February 1931, the Salisbury Repertory Players was consummated with the production in the Duthie Memorial Hall of two short plays, one by GK Chesterton and the other by Lord Dunsany. The small audience attending the premiere was both curious and appreciative.

The undisputed doyens of the local arts and culture movement, however, were Sir Stephen Courtauld and his wife, Lady Virginia. Sir Stephen was a member of the wealthy British textile dynasty founded by his father George, and the couple’s time was divided between their London home of Eltham Palace and La Rochelle, a country retreat in the hills of Penalonga, just outside Umtali. The guestbook at La Rochelle was a glass window, etched by a diamond stylus with the names of many sundry imperial statesmen and royalty. Sir Stephen did not join the family business but instead used his inherited wealth to travel widely and to fund numerous Southern Rhodesian arts endowments. He and lady Virginia built and founded the Courtauld Theatre in Umtali, and were instrumental in the founding of the National Arts Gallery in Salisbury. The couple’s

perambulations between La Rochelle and their London home continued until Sir Stephen died in 1967, whereupon Lady Virginia moved to Jersey where she lived until her death in 1972.

While the Governor of Southern Rhodesia netted a young and vivacious wife, his opposite number in Northern Rhodesia, Sir Hubert Young, was partnered with an entirely different kind of woman. Lady Young was an experienced pilot and regularly flew between Livingstone and Lusaka in her own light aircraft. On 28 February 1935, she set off from Livingstone as usual on a routine flight with the senior Northern Rhodesian Government Medical Officer, a certain Dr Kerby, as her passenger. In a moment of turbulence, the aircraft compass locked, and Lady Young became disorientated. Sighting a river that she assumed to be the Kafue, she followed it, expecting it would lead her to Lusaka. However, it turned out to be the Zambezi, and with little fuel, no clear direction and no recognisable landmarks, she was forced to bring the aircraft down in a maize field on the Southern Rhodesian side. Both pilot and passenger escaped with a few cuts and bruises but found themselves stranded in the middle of the bush with no idea where they were.

It was not long, however, before a group of curious tribesmen appeared, and they directed the pair back to their village where, quite coincidently, a white trader and locust officer by the name of George Cameron was visiting. With him, Cameron carried the essentials of tea, food and a mosquito net, the latter of which he lent to Lady Young. The following morning a runner was sent to alert the Native Commissioner, Fred Marr, who resided at a station some ninety-miles away in Gokwe. In the meanwhile, the party set out and covered the short distance to George Cameron's store on foot. There a more comfortable night was passed before the three set out again the following day to march themselves to Gokwe.

Back in Lusaka, in the meanwhile, Sir Hubert mobilised detachments of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, the local Native Affairs Department and thousands of villagers to scour the route between Livingstone and the Capital. Aircraft from Southern Rhodesia as well as members of the Johannesburg Flying Club joined in the search. The effort, however, was concentrated along Lady Young's logged route, on entirely the wrong side of the Zambezi. However, while the search grew desperate, Lady Young herself, Doctor Kerby and the bush-wise local trader toiled south over the rugged terrain in the heat of late summer. As news leaked

out, the story captured public interest on both sides of the Zambezi, and indeed all over the world. The staff of the *Bulawayo Chronicle* were inundated with requests for news from overseas, while every report and every conjecture was devoured both at home and abroad.

The runner, in the meanwhile, arrived in Gokwe and relayed his message, which Fred Marr passed on to the outside world with the help of a ham radio operator in Bulawayo. Within hours a Westland Wessex of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Airways was in the air with a package of aspirin and champagne ready to drop, both of which would have been welcome had the Wessex been able to locate the party. In the end, it could not and returned to Salisbury by a circular route, and a few bottles of champagne lighter.

An Argus reporter, in the meanwhile, by the name of Arthur Windram, was on his way to Gokwe from Bulawayo by car. He arrived at about nine o'clock the following morning, just in time to join the local Commissioner on an improvised rescue mission. Both men assumed that Lady Young was sojourning at Cameron's store, helplessly awaiting rescue, which, of course, was not quite Lady Young's style. In his impatience, however, Windram borrowed a bicycle from a local messenger and set off alone through the almost trackless wilderness, and his disappointment was acute when he arrived at Cameron's store, nearly dead from exhaustion, to find it deserted. In fact, he only narrowly missed intercepting his quarry as the three tramped in the opposite direction. When Fred Marr caught up, he made radio contact with Gokwe and discovered that Lady Young and Dr Kerby were already en-route, and, in fact, almost there. Feeling slightly foolish, he and Windram set off once again on the long slog back to Gokwe.

Lady Young and her companions arrived at the compound of the Native Commissioner footsore and sunburned after six days of rough travel, where they promptly boarded the waiting Westland Wessex and flew off to a hero's welcome in Lusaka. Windram turned his car around and made the long journey back to Bulawayo to file his report, while Fred Marr committed the episode to his journal. Doubtless, as Lady Rodwell read the story the following morning, she shuddered a little as she sipped her lemon tea on the sun-drenched lawns of Government House.

As this minor drama in the colonies was taking place, however, and as Lady Rodwell cheated at cards, Lord Courthauld entertained the honourable and military, and the ladies and gentlemen of Salisbury were

entertained at Reps, the fate of the working man across the western world was the dole, hunger marches and soup kitchens. In white Rhodesia too, the good life was not by any means universal. Unemployment cut through the white population like the plague, and the best that could be said of it was that being out of work was perhaps less stigmatising in Africa than it might have been in Europe. It affected men of different social classes equally, who shared the hard times as a rite of passage. An unemployed train driver might easily find himself rubbing shoulders on a road construction programme with a penniless Cambridge Blue, while a travelling salesman with an uncle in the House of Lords might share a campfire with a down-at-heel veteran of Delvile Wood. These were temporary hardships, however, and a labour camp did not necessarily mean the end of the road. It was common enough for a destitute landholder to leave his boss boy on site while he worked the roads or the mines to tide the farm over. This happened even in the good times. Murray MacDougall, for instance, periodically worked as a transport rider while the heavy work of cutting his irrigation channel absorbed a never-ending amount of money.

On the tobacco farms, the disaster of 1929 fed directly into the depression, and so that hardy breed of Rhodesian pioneers had precious little to celebrate. That year alone, 700 growers were put out of business. By 1930, tobacco production dropped to under 5.5 million pound weight, as hundreds of speculators who had lost all their capital packed up and left the country. Others stayed, but joined the work camps and waited for things to get better. Those who fled were usually the amateurs who should have known better, while those who stayed undoubtedly did know better by the end of it.

While Huggins might have appeared at times to be aloof to all of this, he did at least acknowledge the importance of the farming industry. Soon after taking office, he confided to a study committee of the Empire Parliamentary Association that: “We, like other countries, are having to subsidise the agricultural industry in every direction. I believe this to be right because I think that any country which does not use the whole of its resources to maintain its rural population will probably find itself right out of the running as and when some sort of normality returns to the world.”

These were wise words. The colony had indeed invested much in agriculture, for had it not, there would probably have been nothing to underwrite a viable economic recovery. As difficult as it was for specialist

producers, they did not face the same hardships as traditional maize growers and cattlemen. When commodity prices collapsed, black maize farmers were able to produce more and sell for less, and nothing distressed a marginal white farmer quite like unequal competition from the black man. While some in the industry welcomed competition, those in maize clamoured for market controls, which in everyday language meant white protectionism.

Instinctively wary of government interference, Huggins' political philosophy had always tended towards limited government. These, however, were extraordinary times. During his first year in office, he was confronted by powerful farming pressure groups that could not be effectively challenged so early in his premiership. In 1931 the 'Maize Control Act' controlled output by limiting the amount of land that could be planted with maize, although these restrictions, it must be said, tended mostly to affect black producers. In 1934, Huggins amended the Act to further strengthen subsidies, responding to similar agitation from a vociferous body of white industrial workers by drafting the 'Industrial Conciliation Act' of 1934, of which we have already heard

It is, of course, the squeaky wheel that gets the oil, and although maize control benefited smaller white growers, it did so at the expense of both large white producers and blacks in the purchase areas and reserves. Indigenous maize growers were cushioned to a degree by being able to produce cheaply, and circumvent controls, tending to sell locally to white farmers and miners for labour and stock feed or to Indian traders for cash.

Tobacco growers, on the other hand, far from pleading for government intervention, dusted themselves down, realigned their leadership and contemplated the future with a combination of hope and determination. The government did help when it could, mainly through marketing control measures and by enforcing standards of quality, but also by providing funds for research, and compelling growers to work as a united body. Growers who had established themselves and their markets, and who were making good money despite the reverses, did not universally welcome government involvement. It would be fair to say, therefore, that the 1930s in the Rhodesian tobacco industry was not only a period of steady recovery but also one of internal review and restructuring. Partly as a result of this, and partly due to the particularly perverse determination shown in the tobacco sector, recovery in the industry was rapid.

In the meanwhile, the imperial preference was set at twenty-five per cent for ten years, helping the tobacco harvest to climb to over 14 million pound weight by 1932. Added to this, British advertisers agreed to phase out the claim that only ‘authentic’ American Virginia was used in the production of their cigarettes. This had the effect of re-igniting a surge of interest in Rhodesian tobacco, and growers gradually released their collective grip on one another’s throats and started to smell a scent of recovery. Soon they began to direct their attention towards growing more of that product that had so enriched and contaminated their lives. By 1934, indeed, a new record was set, with 26 million pound weight of tobacco produced on Southern Rhodesian farms.

7
The Same Old Idea and the Usual Problem

I am not nor ever have been in favour of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any man am in favour of having the superior position assigned to the white race –
Abraham Lincoln

Godfrey Huggins took up the office of Prime Minister feeling a sense of loss for the life that he left behind, which was not helped in the slightest by a significant drop in income. He continued to draw an allowance of £1,000 a year from his firm to augment an annual government remuneration of just £2,500. In the beginning, he tried not to abandon his medical practice entirely, and in fact, while in office he operated on both the Governor of Nyasaland, Sir Harold Kittermaster, and the leader of the local opposition, both of whom complained of no ill effects. He was, however, optimistic if he thought that the demands of office would allow him the time and latitude to continue practising medicine. He wrote and published for the Lancet, but even that would soon to be a thing of the past. History tends to portray him as an excellent public servant, and perhaps this was so, but his biographers also hint that he approached his first official crisis hoping that his government would be defeated.

The root of this crisis was a combination of a weak majority and an initial reluctance to move too far or too fast. Huggins was hindered not only by being a political amateur himself but also because he was surrounded by amateurs at a time when politics in Rhodesia was beginning to professionalise. Some of those standing to his right were disappointed that he did not immediately implement the race policies that had helped win his office, and when he did make certain moves on the race issue, his amateurism was immediately evident. He and his Chief Native Affairs Commissioner, Clive Carbutt, devised a scheme to partition Northern Rhodesia into a grand native reserve, to which all of Southern Rhodesia's

surplus blacks would be shipped. Northern Rhodesian whites would then be invited to come south and be part of an exclusively white homeland. The Imperial Government was obviously taken aback when it was presented with such an enormous and quixotic scheme so early in Huggins' career and quashed the notion immediately.

Despite such radical thinking, Huggins was still moving neither far nor fast enough for the fundamentalist wing of his party. At a party conference held in Gwelo in 1934, he found himself under attack from a belligerent clique of right-wing backbenchers, and at this, he, at last, threw down the gauntlet. "As far as I am concerned", he said, "I would rather return to the relatively peaceful life I have temporarily left. It is impossible to govern with the necessary strength in these difficult times unless I have adequate support."

That he was prepared then and there to resign, no one doubted. The dissenters were brought into line, divisions plastered over and a grumbling party marshalled into line. Although this would not be the end of his troubles, Huggins had for the moment successfully asserted himself. If the electorate wished him to govern, he would do so, but not at any cost. Knowing, however, that a confrontation with the party malcontents would be inevitable at some point, he was inclined to grasp the nettle sooner rather than later.

The moment came when Agriculture Minister C.S Jobling died unexpectedly, leaving a vacancy in the cabinet. Huggins clearly illustrated his lack of faith in his caucus by replacing Jobling with a farmer, Captain Frank Harris, who was neither a party insider nor a parliamentarian. This prompted an immediate rebellion from established party members, who demanded to know why one of them had not been chosen to represent such a significant portfolio. Huggins, however, held his ground. As Prime Minister, he reserved the right to appoint whomever he deemed fit for the job. The difficulty was, of course, that the constitution required Harris to be a member of parliament, and it therefore became incumbent on Huggins to ensure that he was elected. Help in this regard came from an unlikely quarter when, in a hint of political accommodations to come, the Rhodesia Party offered not to field a candidate against Harris in the by-election occasioned by Jobling's death.

The uproar was again quieted, but tensions remained high as Harris took his seat. Huggins then made rather thin use of the crisis by

approaching the Governor for a dissolution of parliament. Chief Justice Sir Fraser Russell, who was acting Governor at the time, demurred, stating that there was no precedence for dissolution purely on the grounds of an internal party squabble. It was, however, editor of the *Rhodesia Herald,* George Ferguson, who offered a solution to the impasse when he wrote in a leader article:

"The best interests of the country would be served by party reconstruction … It is known that the Rhodesia Party is ready to work with Mr Huggins. If he were to approach them to form an entirely new party by combining the Reform and Rhodesia Parties, there are good grounds for believing that his overtures would be more than sympathetically received."

Percy Fynn, leader of the Rhodesia Party, and a handful of his colleagues were so impressed by this idea that they duly brokered a deal between Huggins and the Rhodesia Party, and three days later, following a meeting of the executive committee of the Reform Party, an amalgamation was announced. The Rhodesia and Reform Parties were to be combined into a new political alliance to be called the 'United Party', which would be led by Huggins. Sir Fraser Russell accepted this as grounds for dissolution, and in November 1934 the country revisited the polls.

After the votes were counted, it was shown that the United Party had been returned with twenty-four seats, giving Huggins an eighteen-seat majority. The old Reform Party won one seat while the Labour Party garnered five. With that, Huggins won a decisive hold over both the government of Rhodesia and its white hearts and minds, neither of which would he relinquish for another two decades. The medical fraternity of Salisbury lost a surgeon, but the nation gained a credible Prime Minister and peered out of the first decade of Responsible Government with something of its old confidence returned.

Godfrey Huggins was now no longer an amateur, and to prove it he revived that old vision inherited from Rhodes. All the great colonial statesmen of southern Africa have at one time or another dreamed of a grand union of states stretching, if not as far as Cairo, then at least encompassing all of the British settler colonies of the south-central region. Huggins was fortunate in that he approached the question with time to work at it, thereby improving the odds of success significantly. Unlike Rhodes, his version of the dream was secular, and unlike Smuts, he was not pressed into a tight corner. Although in some respects Huggins failed, it was he who

over the following months and years came closest of the three to realising the dream.

From the standpoint of many local whites, the practical advantages of amalgamation with Northern Rhodesia were now much clearer, thanks in the main to Northern Rhodesian copper, but also because of general progress in the north that made it less of a yawning black hole. To Huggins and his generation, the main problem facing Africa was its backwardness and the conservatism of its traditional institutions. Things had moved too far along for the black man of Africa ever to contemplate recapturing the past, and yet quite evidently a majority had yet to entirely embrace or adapt to the modern world. Moreover, many colonials felt betrayed by the Imperial Government's conversion from an instrument of exploitation to one concerned above all else with the wellbeing of the native. It was felt that in the interests of defending civilised standards, the Imperial Government should guard against any possibility that blacks might prematurely rush to power. If there was a vague sense in the colony that government by blacks would one day be inevitable, there certainly were very few who felt it advisable inside of a century.

As the Hilton Young Commission confirmed, the problem that Southern Rhodesia faced was her unequal race policy. His Majesty's Government had relinquished all practical authority to protect the natives of South Africa when the Union was formed in 1910, and the results of this were self-evident. Over questions of race policy, Southern Rhodesia looked south more often than not, which made the Colonial Office very careful to limit the spread of this sort of contamination further north. Both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were British protectorates, and so were governed directly from Whitehall under very different constitutions to the south. In both territories, blacks enjoyed far greater freedoms of movement and political expression than in Southern Rhodesia, and certainly more than in South Africa, so naturally, the Imperial Government was loath to consider granting Southern Rhodesia broader political reach by amalgamating all three territories.

On the other hand, the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the possibility of war tended once again to focus the mind of the British Government on Africa. Not only might calls from Hitler for the return of Germany's former colonies see the Huns once again pitching their tent in the middle of a British jamboree, but the natural sense of comradeship felt

by the Boers for Germany might see South African loyalty in the event of a war compromised. With this in mind, the idea of drawing the three naturally allied territories of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland into a single entity gained a certain amount of appeal. Such an amalgamation would strengthen the British hand in central Africa at a time when global influence would be vital, while also acting as a political counterweight to a potentially aggressive South Africa.

South Africa's ideological withdrawal from British Africa was increasingly evident, not only in her identification with fascism but also in the introduction of trade tariffs that put an end to much of the free trade that had once been conducted between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. In the event, the effect of this proved positive for Rhodesia since domestic industrial capacity quickly increased as goods once imported from South Africa started to be manufactured locally. As a consequence, Rhodesian industrialists also found new markets in Northern Rhodesia with its burgeoning mining interests and vibrant economy.

These were some of the important practical reasons for amalgamation. The emotional reasons, however, were more obscure. Whites were beginning to feel under pressure as the certainties of old seemed suddenly less certain in a changing world. A sense that the world they had constructed around them might not always be theirs planted a seed of fear in their hearts. This was particularly true of the working classes and the landowners, who found themselves searching for ways to restore their sense of security and stability. The isolationist, and rather elitist Rhodesia of old now found itself vulnerable, and craving the safety of size and influence.

Huggins opened the game in 1935 by introducing another of his quixotic schemes. He suggested a general amalgamation of the railway belt, which meant in principle that the railway line, and everything connected to it, including the Copperbelt, would come under Southern Rhodesian control. Since anything of consequence in Northern Rhodesia was located within 20 miles of the railway, and since the line more or less dissected the protectorate up its length, the country on either side could safely be deemed useless and tossed back to the blacks. This idea was not original, but it was cunning. It appealed to Southern Rhodesia, but not to her northern neighbour or, for that matter, to the British Government. Thus, it was politely filed away for future consideration, but attention had been captured, and the ice was broken.

A year later, Huggins put forward another, more sensible proposal for a federation of territories that would quarantine each from what it disliked about the others, but would unite them sufficiently for economic growth and political stability. The Colonial Office, probably relieved that this scheme was a little less hare-brained, allowed the governors of the three territories concerned to meet informally over the question. Closer cooperation was discussed and broadly agreed upon, although this would initially be limited to justice, customs, defence and other bureaucratic procedures. Although Huggins pressed for more, and the governors themselves were supportive, this was as far as Britain was prepared to be pushed for the time being.

It is worth noting that, among the many facets of resistance to amalgamation were the Southern Rhodesian blacks, who regarded the Northern Rhodesian natives as uncivilised and feared to lose their labour market to a flood of cheaper workers. Ironically, they also preferred the idea of uniting with South Africa for reasons of access to higher education and sharing in the social advancement that was taking place among blacks there.

In the meanwhile, a second and less formal governor's and inter-party conference was held at Victoria Falls in 1936, to which Huggins was also invited. A united Rhodesia was agreed upon, and again pressure was exerted on Whitehall. The Secretaries of State for both the Colonial and Dominion Offices met and decided for the second time to appoint a commission to look into the question of closer political union, if not complete amalgamation. This time the commission was chaired by Viscount Bledisloe, former Governor General of New Zealand, assisted by the Kenyan writer and journalist Elspeth Huxley. The Commission recommended the acceptance of amalgamation in principle but considered that for various reasons – principally differences in native policy – that the change should not be contemplated immediately. As an interim measure, increased cooperation between the two Rhodesias on an administrative, scientific and judicial level was encouraged. Federation as a lesser option was ruled out because of the fundamental constitutional incompatibility of the three territories.

Although naturally disappointed, Huggins was not diverted, although he was forced to put the matter aside for the moment to concentrate on other things. At that point, the war interrupted the process, and from 1939 until the end of hostilities, nothing much of the scheme was

heard. Instead, more practical home-based economic and political considerations took centre stage in preparation for the significant and inevitable changes that would follow.

In the meanwhile, European rearmament created an accelerated demand for almost every primary product and raw material that the Empire could provide, and as base metal producers, the two Rhodesias were particularly well placed. Copper, for example, was in high demand for use in tank, aircraft and battleship electronics, and between 1931 and 1939, increased copper production in Northern Rhodesia resulted in a consequent boom in Southern Rhodesian coal production and railway tariffs. While to a greater or lesser extent, everybody benefited, these were golden times for the British South Africa Company. For the first time since it was floated in 1889, Cecil Rhodes Chartered Company was making money hand over fist. Subsequently, a deal was struck between the railways and the Northern Rhodesian copper mining companies to continue the transport of copper through the system for a further twenty years.

While all this might have been manna to an ailing economy, it was in agriculture that Huggins and his government still pinned their hopes. In the years leading up to the war, the agricultural industry began increasingly to benefit from thoughtful streamlining and original legislation. As a primary producer, Southern Rhodesia was at last in a position to reap maximum benefit from the vast changes affecting the world. In 1934, a second ‘Maize Control Act’ bolstered existing legislation, while in the same year a ‘Cattle Levy’ and the ‘Beef Export Bounty Act’ were added to give additional assistance to ranchers. The Dairy Control Board regulated the dairy industry, and in 1937 the government, in a departure from the Huggins doctrine of limited government, purchased the Bulawayo branch of the Imperial Cold Storage Supply Company. A further Act was passed, setting up a Cold Storage Commission with powers to control the industry for the export of frozen and chilled meats. In 1936, the Cotton Research and Industry Board was formed to regulate a crop that had otherwise flourished without the sort of state intervention that kept the rest of the agricultural industry afloat.

Like tobacco, the roots of cotton in Rhodesia lay in the ambivalent attitude that British manufacturers held towards their main suppliers in the United States. From 1910 until the outbreak of World War I, the American crop suffered a general failure that was only capped by the war. Britain

again found herself looking to her colonies, primarily Egypt and India, but a glance was spared for Southern Rhodesia. The resulting boost to the crop helped it survive long enough to experience something of a mini-boom from 1923 up to the end of the decade. By the 1930s cotton was being reviewed as a cash crop since it seemed to have survived on its own merits and built markets on more realistic foundations than tobacco. Once again the advent of war and the inevitable economic restructuring that accompanied the mass mobilisation of armies vindicated early optimism and poised Southern Rhodesia to reap the benefits.

Despite all this, however, tobacco remained the brilliant problem child of the Rhodesian agricultural family. Its fortunes had risen and fallen with bewildering regularity since Lord Grey politely coughed over the blue smoke of a home-grown cigar. By the 1930s it was apparent that the industry's main problem lay with its lack of internal cohesion, and in a shortage of industry guidelines and conditions to both tame the obstreperous few and curb chaotic fluctuations.

After the collapse of the cooperative system and the disastrous events of 1929, the tobacco industry resumed its preferred polarity. Individual growers worked in competition with one another, each establishing his own buying contracts and succeeding or failing on his own acumen. Some made a fortune while others, those Huggins called spineless, spoon-fed and inefficient, limped on in steady decline. An almost obsessive determination to remain free of buyer monopolies tended to nurture resistance to the development of any cooperative system of tobacco marketing. The effect of this was to maintain the industry in a half-formed state that crippled efforts towards general advancement. The auction system, which was universally accepted by the 1930s, had been so discredited by the Tobacco Warehouse debacle that producers remained unified only in resistance to it. As the decade progressed, a bitter dispute played out between growers who maintained their right to sell wherever and to whomever they wanted, and those who pressed for legislation to make it compulsory for all tobacco grown to be sold at public auction. Those successful growers who had thus far profited through individual contracts stressed that any merger would merely permit the weak to ride on the backs of the strong.

In the end, it was the preference of the buyers and not the growers that swung the debate in favour of the unionists. In 1933, a 'Tobacco Levy

Act' was passed that forced all growers to become part of the Rhodesia Tobacco Growers Association. Further industry regulation quickly followed with the 'Tobacco Pest Suppression Act' and the 'Tobacco Research Act' of 1935, mandating both growers and government to contribute funds for further research into growing techniques, disease and pest control. Most importantly, the introduction of compulsory auction sales in 1936 brought the ever-divisive problem of marketing under control, and the first auction floor opened for business on 11 April 1936. While dramatic success still continued to elude the industry, a sense of optimism was now inescapable as the tide of European politics began to tilt towards war. To the shrewd and the sanguine, it was clear that circumstances would gradually start to shift the onus of commodity supply and demand from a buyers to a sellers market, and by 1939, Southern Rhodesian tobacco, in keeping with primary industry throughout the empire, was ready to reap the bonanza of war.

While agriculture groped its way towards success, the social and political picture of Southern Rhodesia was somewhat less encouraging. By the end of the decade, Huggins had proved that he was an able administrator of a white colony, but he had still made public no definitive native policy. Godfrey Huggins emerges from the pages of history as a great and gifted man, with irrepressible humour and given to neither deep reflection, regret nor indecision. He tended to be less a man of his own ideas than a filter for the good ideas of others. The assurances of his hagiographers that he was entirely abreast of black concerns, and that he understood and appreciated their aspirations have an apologetic air that suggests he was no such thing. In reality, the personal touch of his leadership existed only in regards to his peers. Despite holding the office of Minister for Native Affairs, he felt unsettled by the portfolio and preferred to deal with it through the Native Department.

If Huggins was never entirely reconciled to blacks, it could at least be said of him that he had a lot more to do with them than most. In the tradition of his profession, he regarded blacks as he might have looked upon the London poor – people who needed his help, advice and sympathy, but who had no business questioning the opinions and prescriptions of their betters. This was Huggins' version of trusteeship, and as the arch-paternalist, he reserved the absolute right to guide with a firm hand the wayward children he was charged to protect. Whatever 'trusteeship' might mean to any native or government official, the one thing that each held in

common was that the black man was incapable of making intelligent choices on his own account.

As the decade matured, in the meanwhile, many questions were asked about the effectiveness of segregation as a real and long-term solution to the Native Problem. It had increasingly been noted that more blacks were then living outside the reserves than in 1931, when the Land Apportionment Act came into law, and no practical policy had so far evolved to stem, let alone reverse this trend. It was predicted that a build-up of hostility in black society was inevitable and that someday this might spill over into violence. Black urbanisation was, of course, unstoppable, and so long as whites were punctilious about immigration standards, there would never be enough of them willing to do menial work, and so blacks would continue to flood into the towns and cities.

Thus, despite the fast-tracked removal of blacks from European areas, Huggins was forced to push forward the deadline for the completion of the work by five years. The government acquired more land for native settlement and accelerated the construction of boreholes, schools and clinics. Nonetheless, Huggins was compelled to admit to Parliament that the final solution might not turn out to be quite so final after all. Complete separation of the races had clearly been proved unworkable, and although Huggins was unwilling to abandon the principle altogether, he was on occasions forced to concede that it required significant revision.

One of these revisions was the ‘Natives Registration Act’, that came into force in 1936, and introduced pass laws to limit black movement in white areas. Since in practical terms, blacks could not be stopped from working and therefore living in white areas, their movements were to be controlled and carefully monitored. In 1930, educated Christian blacks lobbied missionaries to persuade the government to repeal the notice of 1906, that made it an offence for a black to use any sidewalk or pavement within any municipality. Indeed, this pro-black-rights trend continued, until, by 1938, acceptance of urban blacks had advanced to the point that the Salisbury Municipality moved to provide housing for over 5,000 of the incumbent urban population. It did not, however, accommodate a further 6,000 (exclusive of domestic servants) who were living in various corners and commons, at the back of warehouses and factories and in ‘private locations’ adjacent to mines and industries. While all this was a significant advance on the absolute denial of old, it had not been easy to achieve. The

Land Apportionment Act declared the cities the white man's domain, and only his interests were to be catered for there. It would require a much more open acknowledgement of black urbanisation before a formal native housing programme would be launched, and there was no evidence that this was about to happen.

The problem of poor living conditions among urban blacks continued to be ignored until it was pushed into the forefront of the public debate by the urban unrest of 1945 and 1948. However, by the outbreak of war in 1939, Huggins and his government had at least concluded that physical separation as a theory was dead. The Native Problem had now become a build-up of black political energy that physical separation alone could not arrest. Around a framework of native policies, that were carefully crafted to avoid the slightest possibility of resistance, resistance was quietly forming.

Huggins and a handful of others began to notice at last the rise of a black intelligentsia. That most of the rank and file whites failed to take note of it had little to do with open racism, and much to do with the frenetic pace of recovery in the run-up to war. Nonetheless, as the 1930s slipped into the 1940s, the second generation of educated blacks, those with university degrees, began to filter back into the country. The war itself did not affect or limit the growth of this black intelligentsia, other than to allow it to proceed mostly unnoticed. Blacks, in fact, found the war enlightening. The British were filled with the doctrine of freedom from oppression that they poured over the African as proof of British greatness. The blacks then looked at the British themselves and thought very well of their philosophy.

For those blacks who observed the war from afar, the lessons tended to be political. For those who fought in it, the lessons were more direct. Black soldiers were astonished to discover that white men could fill the lower ranks of a huge institution like the British Army, and duly be slaughtered in large numbers. Furthermore, black Rhodesian soldiers, and indeed black soldiers from all over British Africa, fought white men in many battles and killed them. This naturally wholly changed the black man's view of the white man's inviolability. Black Rhodesian troops were mostly involved in the Burma Campaign to drive the Japanese out of Burma, and as such, they were deployed to India, where they were retrained before deployment, and where they were withdrawn for rest and reorganisation. There they were exposed to the Indian independence

movement, the energy of which inspired many. Add to that the defeat of fascism, and all of the airs of sovereignty and self-determination that followed, and it could be said that this was a watershed moment in the development of the black nationalist movement.

In March 1938, the Reverend Thompson Samkange was invited to attend the International Missionary Conference in Tambaram, Madras, as one of two delegates from Southern Rhodesia. He too would be inspired by the Indian independence movement, led by men such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi, both of whom he would meet. He would also meet others from Africa, like Albert Luthuli, and many more from diverse corners of the British Empire, and the world. He was overawed by the apparent sophistication of the Asians he met, including delegates from China, Japan, India and Ceylon. According to his longtime friend Enoch Musa: "It was an eye-opener to him and to many other Africans. He saw that we were very low by comparison. The debates were very high. He did not speak. He was learning. We still have not reached the edge of these things."

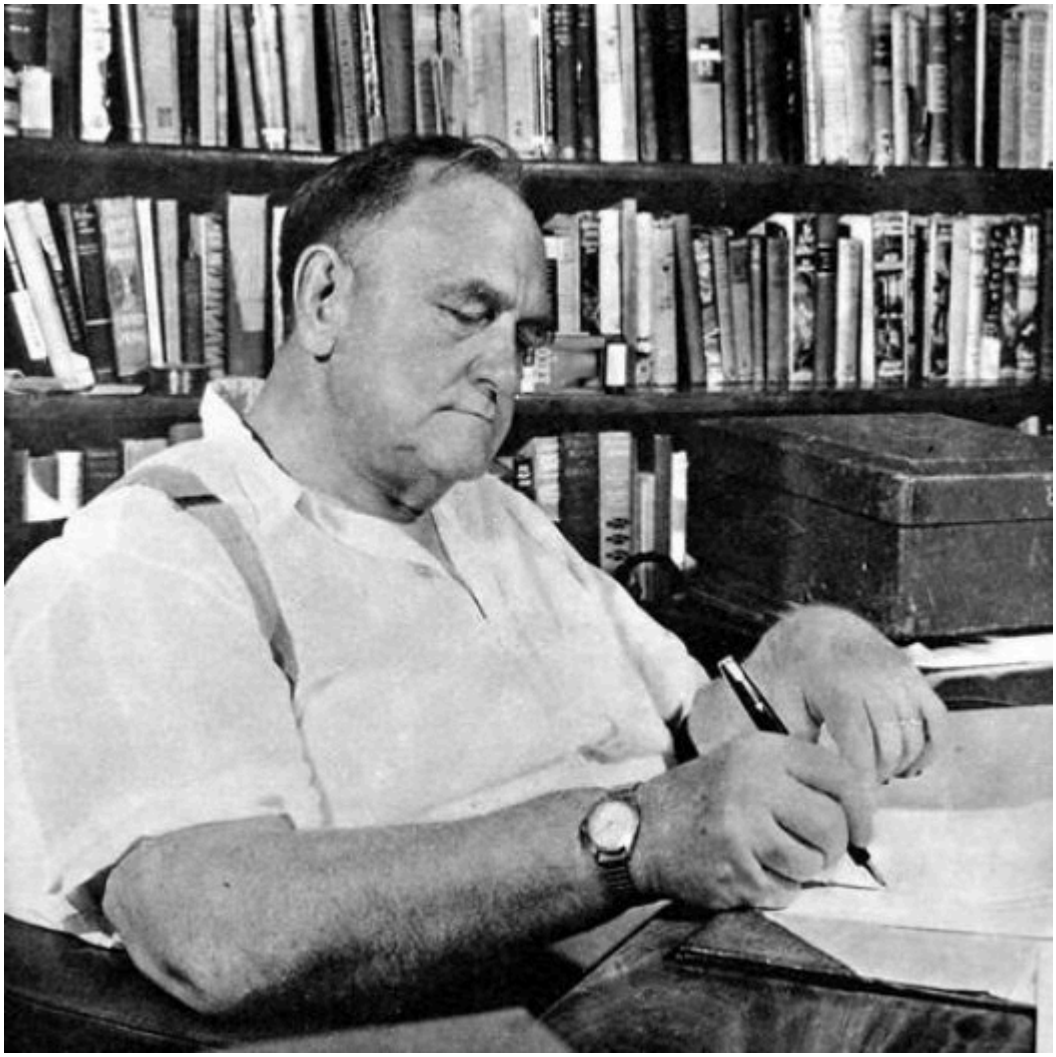
Overawed perhaps, but not discouraged. Indeed the Reverend Samkange was deeply impressed and stimulated by the open political dialogue of so many diverse peoples. Many of these groups were engaged in versions of the same struggle that the black people of Southern Rhodesia were only just beginning to contemplate. He sensed a daring new theology in the unfettered exchange of ideas, and he was challenged to express his own views on nationalism, totalitarianism, Christ and communism, as well as such scarcely considered concepts as Christian Socialism.

Before he left India, the Reverend Samkange and other delegates travelled to Wardha where Gandhi's ashram was situated, and there he was introduced to the great man himself. He and Gandhi spoke about the years Gandhi spent in South Africa, his victories and his defeats. He then lunched at the Indian National Congress building, and for the first time was introduced to Satyagraha, Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent protest and non-cooperation.

When the Reverend Samkange returned home to Southern Rhodesia, those who knew him immediately detected a change in his attitude, and the tone of his language, for he had turned a vital corner. He returned home speaking the language of national freedom, and although at that point

‘nationalist’ may be too strong a word, the road to nationalism lay clear before him, and before a number of others too.

In the meanwhile, the call once again went out to the sons and daughter of England to rally to the defence of the Empire. Questions of black and white, Labour or Reform, where all forgotten as the heart and soul of a young nation went out to its kith and kin threatened from the shores of Normandy. Huggins prepared to place the country on a war footing, and for this, he felt it necessary to go to the electorate. Labour, of course, howled in protest, claiming, not unjustly, that Huggins was trying to make capital out of a European war. His reasoning, however, was that a war might require the enactment of emergency powers, and should this be the case, a refreshed parliament would be necessary to carry it through. The Governor, Sir Herbert Stanley, was not obliged to agree with Huggins, but he did, and in April 1939, the country went to the polls. The new House was not unlike the old. The United Party won twenty-three seats with Labour emerging as the only opposition. The country was now virtually in Huggins’ pocket, and he built his cabinet with the war in mind, and then dug in for the grim years to follow.



Sir Roy Welensky

8
War, Peace, Hope and Expectation

The White Rhodesia Council does not ask anybody to forsake their religious teaching; but to face the hard realities of life and acknowledge the dangers looming in front of the white people of the world – **White Rhodesia Council 1951**

Although small in absolute numbers, when judged by the standards of even some of the major combatants, Southern Rhodesia's per capita manpower contribution to WWII was disproportionately high. Some 8,500 white men and 1,500 white women served in the Allied ranks, of whom 693 were killed. Some 14,000 blacks served in various combat roles and suffered the loss of 126 lives. When the call to arms came, the response was so universal that the Minister of Justice and Defence was forced to introduce a system of selective conscription aimed at limiting the depletion of essential services. The jingoists hailed this as probably the only time in history that recruitment quotas were used to keep as many men as possible *out* of uniform.

While her manpower contribution may have been small, Southern Rhodesia's influence on the battlefront was again significant. As in World War I, it did not go unnoticed that Rhodesian youth were incubated with a command sensibility, mainly born of their experience in handling sizeable black labour forces. As offensive as this fact might have seemed to the liberal fraternity in England, it was a commodity much valued in war, and Rhodesians were sought after for command positions as both staff and field officers. In Rhodesia itself, there were no requirements for officers to serve in the ranks as conditioning for command, since in Rhodesia the other ranks were black. An aptitude for command was expected from white recruits from the onset, and for the most part, they were equal to it.

The first campaign of the War in Africa was the East Africa Campaign, confronting the Italians along the borders of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, which concluded in the liberation of Ethiopia on 5 May 1941. Troops from the various battalions of the West African Frontier Force were used in this campaign, along with many colonial detachments and large numbers of South African troops. White Rhodesian officers and senior NCOs were attached to each battalion, because, as Robert Tredgold put it:

“At least our men had seen a black man outside a Christy Minstrel performance.”

Tredgold was also concerned that the white manpower of the colony should not be concentrated in a single regiment. It was important not to repeat the mistakes of WWI, where the loss of manpower from the 2nd Battalion of the Rhodesia Regiment was so severe that the force was unable to sustain itself as a fighting unit. The same fate had met the men of the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel during the Somme offensive when almost the entire regiment was wiped out in a single advance. The risk to Rhodesian manpower, therefore, was spread by dispersing volunteers widely in a variety of different reserves and regiments of the British Army.

The result of this is that it has become difficult from the perspective of general history to point to any particular theatre or action where Rhodesian servicemen contributed more than any other. Rhodesians served in one form or another in all the principal theatres of the conflict, and there is no doubt that they distinguished themselves and rendered a contribution disproportionate to the number of men who signed up.

British South Africa Policeman and future head of the intelligence community, Ken Flower, was one such example. He joined a small group of Rhodesians who sailed up to Berbera in the Gulf of Aden to take part in the re-occupation of British Somaliland. Others served in Italy, Europe and the Far East. Yet others were engaged in the Western Desert, in the Long Range Desert Group and the exploits of the fabled Desert Rats of the 7th Armoured Division. In fact, David Stirling, founder of the SAS and architect of covert operations in North Africa, was a sometime Rhodesian who settled briefly in Salisbury after the end of the war.

It was, however, in the RAF that perhaps the most significant Southern Rhodesian contribution was made. Hardwicke Holderness, of whom much more will be heard later, joined the Oxford University Air Squadron as a student in 1938 and served as a fighter pilot almost from the moment hostilities broke out. Holderness emerged as one of the most decorated Rhodesian servicemen, and a hero of the Battle of Britain. Other Rhodesian aces included Wing Commander John Plagis and Flight Lieutenant Ernest Williams, each with seventeen confirmed kills. William Maguire, Neville Bowker, Frank Holman, Perry St Quintin, Caesar Hull, George Buchanan, Eric Dicks-Sherwood, Johnny Deal and Percy ‘Ping’ Newton notched up eighty-four kills among them. Although never

celebrated as an ace, future Prime Minister Ian Smith flew in North Africa and Italy before being shot down over the Po Valley, where he was briefly sheltered by the Italian *partisani*. When it is considered that Australia fielded eighty-three RAF fighter aces, New Zealand over 100 and South Africa fifty-eight, the size of the Rhodesian contribution can perhaps be better appreciated.

White Rhodesia has tended over the years, a little fraudulently perhaps, to lay claim to Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, head of RAF Bomber Command. His experience as a 'Rhodesian' was limited to a period between 1910 and 1915 when he tried his hand at mining and farming in the colony before returning to Britain. There he joined the Royal Flying Corps, receiving the first permanent commission in the fledgeling Royal Air Force. He would later emerge as one of the most controversial figures of World War II, due to his policy of carpet-bombing to breaking the morale of the German civilian population. This policy attracted numerous critics, notwithstanding that it was initiated by the Luftwaffe in similar attacks on non-military targets in Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, Southampton and other British cities. His request for a special campaign medal for Bomber Command was refused, leading to much bitterness among surviving bomber crews. After the war, Harris was the only senior British commander not to be elevated to the peerage. A disappointed man, he retired from the RAF in 1946 but returned to South Africa rather than Rhodesia where he went into business.

The black Rhodesian contribution to the allied effort was made late in the war and began with the formation in 1940 of the 1st Battalion Rhodesia African Rifles. This was the first Rhodesian regular formation, with recruits drawn from both the maShona and the amaNdebele, and with black NCOs seconded from the British South Africa Police Askari unit. The officers, of course, were white and drawn mainly from the ranks of the BSAP and the Native Affairs Department. A training depot was built in the suburb of Borrowdale, alongside Government House, and in 1942 training was undertaken both there and in the Eastern Highlands. At the end of 1943, the unit set off for Kenya for final training, after which it became part of 22nd East Africa Independent Brigade, and after further training with 82nd (West Africa) Division, it was shipped to Burma to be deployed against the Japanese.

The battalion first saw action in April 1945, although by then the Japanese were already in full retreat. They nonetheless fought a determined rear-guard action that blooded the Rhodesian soldiers with heavy casualties. Japanese commanders, who had never before fought black men, are said to have complimented the battalion for its discipline and determination in battle. It was in Burma that the RAR regimental song 'Sweet Banana' was born. When sung in chorus, it tells of the delight to banana-loving palates of the local sweet variety of this fruit.

The signature, and ongoing contribution that Southern Rhodesia made to the war, however, and vice versa, was her participation in the Empire Air Training Scheme. In the run-up to the war, pilot training typically took place on the British mainland, but once in the thick of the Battle of Britain, this was no longer practical. Pilots in training would interfere with air combat over Britain and add to the congestion of local airfields and facilities. The British climate was also not ideal for the large-scale processing of trainee pilots and crews. The clear skies of the dominions were an obvious alternative, with the excellent climate of Southern Rhodesia particularly favoured.

The story of the Empire Air Training Scheme is also the story of the development of an independent air force in Rhodesia. Towards the end of 1935, flight training began at Belvedere Airport under the aegis of the 1st Battalion Rhodesia Regiment. In March 1936, Group Captain Arthur Harris arrived in Salisbury to offer advice on the future course of flying training. It was he who suggested the establishment of a unit to train local territorial personnel who, in the event of war, would be sent to Kenya for service with the RAF. On 17 July 1936, the Southern Rhodesia Government Gazette announced the formation of an air section to be attached to the Defence Force.

The unit could already boast four Hawker Audax and six Hawker Hart biplanes, but before long another four Audax and two Harts were flown out from Britain, arriving just six days before the declaration of war. The unit was in due course renamed the Southern Rhodesia Air Unit, and the first trainee pilots, a young Hardwicke Holderness among them, were awarded their wings in May 1938.

In August the following year, with the declaration of war imminent, the Southern Rhodesian Air Unit was deployed to Kenya as planned. There it patrolled the Northern Frontier District, keeping an eye on the Italians in

Somaliland, and in April 1940, the unit was absorbed into the RAF as No. 237 (Rhodesia) Squadron. Two other Rhodesian-manned squadrons were formed, and these were No 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron and No 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron, RAF.

In May 1940, an agreement was reached between the British Air Ministry and the participating dominions, including Australia, South Africa and Canada, and the Empire Air Training Scheme was formally up and running. The Rhodesian Air Training Group eventually came to include four service flying training schools, an initial training wing, a combined air observers and air gunners school and a central flying school for instructors. By the end of the war, over 7,600 pilots and 2,300 navigators passed through the system in Southern Rhodesia.

The infrastructure needed for the operation was, of course, massive, and Southern Rhodesia at that point had few such facilities. With a blank cheque from the British Air Ministry, therefore, the officer commanding, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Charles Meredith, set about organising a considerable building programme with an annual turnover of almost £350,000. This windfall provided quite a construction boom in an already steadily booming local economy. Then there were the 12,000 adult white males employed by the scheme, the majority from Britain, as well as 5,000 blacks and about 200 white women of the Woman's Auxiliary Air Service.

The boom in immigration that followed the war can be attributed directly to the exposure enjoyed by so many Britons and other allied nationals to the pleasant climate and society of Southern Rhodesia. All of this also contributed much to the rapid post-war development, but over and above all else, it produced an essential understanding between Britain and Southern Rhodesia, one that would ramify deep into the future. Since the Empire Air Training Scheme was a combined project of His Majesty's government and dominions, Southern Rhodesia could construe that it had been informally upgraded to dominion. Why this was important to the white sense of the future was that the other dominions were moving smoothly towards independence, and Southern Rhodesia more than anything wanted to do the same. In 1925, Colonial Office responsibility for Southern Rhodesia was transferred across the street to the Dominions Office, which was further evidence that Southern Rhodesia was seen by the imperial establishment as more than just a self-governing colony. There was much positive encouragement originating in London over the question of

independence within the Commonwealth, and although nothing was submitted to writing, the impression was certainly given that His Majesty's gratitude for the Southern Rhodesian war contribution would extend to a grant of independence, when it became feasible.

On the domestic front, in the meanwhile, the war caused no less hardship and anxiety than it did anywhere else. In spite of this, and in just a few key sectors, a profound economic revolution was triggered. With 1,000 tons of copper required for the construction of a single battleship and two miles of wire needed for the electronics of one bomber aircraft, it is hardly surprising that the Copperbelt fuelled a boom, the effects of which were felt throughout the region. Britain's isolation and the pressure on her war treasury created an unprecedented demand for empire products. Southern Rhodesian manufactured goods found a ready market north of the Zambezi, while prices for just about anything that could be produced shot skyward. Wankie Collieries worked at maximum capacity to fulfil orders for the blast furnaces of the Copperbelt and, as Rhodesian technical expertise and investment flooded north, dividends and remittances flooded back. A large part of the economic revolution was the migration of black labour from the reserves to the cities and industrial areas, and this again threw the formula of racial separation into disarray.

On the economic front, the expected recovery took many forms, but it manifested most dramatically in the tobacco industry. Youthful tobacco baron and chairman of the Rhodesia Tobacco Association Winston Field flew to London in late 1938 to meet with representatives of the British tobacco industry. Thanks to prevailing political and economic uncertainties, and the looming spectre of war, British manufacturers had lately begun to express a renewed interest in Rhodesian tobacco. In September of that year, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met Adolph Hitler at his Bavarian lair of Berchtesgaden, and so browbeaten was he that he returned to London convinced of peace. British industrialists were less naïve and began cautiously anticipating a war. A dollar shortage would naturally limit British access to American tobacco, which encouraged the industry to reexamine the sterling area, and nestling in a bed of raw potential, the Southern Rhodesian tobacco industry was waiting for just such a day.

Winston Field was asked a simple question, for which he had a simple answer. What would it take to effect a rapid increase in Southern Rhodesian production capacity, and the answer was the guarantee of a

minimum price of three shillings per pound at auction. In reply, Field was given an earnest verbal assurance that this price would indeed be guaranteed. Word quickly spread, and almost immediately the acreage under tobacco increased by over thirty per cent. It happened that heavy rains washed out the 1939 growing season, but record crop in 1940 gave Southern Rhodesian growers an opportunity to test British sincerity. In the event, few were surprised when the auction floors opened to find the British buyers reluctant to part with a penny. Prices remained depressed, and there was no sign of meeting the promised three-shilling guarantee. Growers were quick to complain to the ministry, and in response Frank Harris took one or two of the British buyers aside and reminded them of what had been agreed. He then threatened that if the three-shilling minimum was not respected, he would close the sales floors and that would be it for the year. The threat worked, and when the floors reopened the following morning, the price per pound was at the magic figure of three-shillings.

This marked one of the most significant moments in Southern Rhodesian history. For the first time in a long and tortured contest, British tobacco blinked, and the wilderness years were over. War rolled across Europe, and Britain was soon under siege. Nervous troops in every theatre demanded a steady supply of cigarettes while anxious urbanites chain-smoked as they peered out of the shelters at a rain of German bombs. As the tobacco manufacturers and buyers anticipated, American tobacco became as scarce as her dollars, and every scrap of leaf that Rhodesian growers could produce was sold.

Tobacco farmers, in the meanwhile, were already benefiting from the local war economy. Price controls on inputs and heavy government subsidies for production significantly cut overheads, but without concurrent regulation of selling prices. It was not long before the cost of leaf on the auction floors more than doubled, and continued to rise. It was the stuff of dreams. By late 1942 and early 1943 white tobacco farmers leapt from an eccentric band of agricultural adventurers to the aristocracy of the Southern Rhodesian farming community. Maize and beef producers, who had suffered price controls at both ends, were initially stung, and then increasingly envious. In an atmosphere of shortages and rationing, when sons and brothers were fighting over the skies of England, there was something odious about a class of cash-heavy backcountry farmers garnishing their lands and homesteads with conspicuous wealth. The

jealousy was short-lived, however, for the tobacco boom lit a fire under the Southern Rhodesian economic pot, and soon it was boiling furiously.

By 1946, the value of tobacco exports for the first time exceeded gold. Two years later tobacco would be worth a staggering £11 million sterling, and soon it was the main prop of the Southern Rhodesian economy. More than anything, however, tobacco money released a surge of creativity that revolutionised and modernised the general farming industry. It capitalised landholdings, funded experiments, bridged failures and financed research and the import of plant and livestock. It built homesteads, dams, weirs, roads and tobacco barns. It gave the country its signature richly textured and multi-layered agricultural landscape and created an industry that, for the remainder of the colonial period, was the envy of farming communities everywhere. It would not be overstating the point to say that tobacco money built Southern Rhodesia.

Huggins, in the meanwhile, found the war a dreary business. While his best men were away in uniform, he was obliged to deal with all of the mundane matters of government himself. He also found himself keeping the company of old political dogs who, while preoccupied with stoking their spleen, were also alert to the slightest sign of weakness. It was all important stuff, but no less tedious for that, although it did at least rub the last burrs of amateurism from the seams of his casting.

Huggins was by nature an imperialist, and insofar as he had any economic philosophy at all, it tended to follow the Victorian credo of hard work and free enterprise. He had never been given to sympathy for the weak, although during the difficult years of the depression he did realise that the weak can be vocal, and are usually strong in numbers. Consequently, while he was happy to see the pioneers of farming and industry prosper at last, he was also aware that he could not afford to alienate the unionists or the white working classes. While he tried to remain true to the free market and an open economy, he also found himself pressured, by the left wing of the House to move away from the loose style of capitalism that had tended to thrive during the casual inter-war years. State intervention was now part and parcel of modern economics, and if Southern Rhodesia wanted to be counted among progressive nations, Huggins would have to guide it through a period of painful reform. However, remaining true to his natural pragmatism, he took the view that success in the application of socialism lay in both stealth and moderation.

He began with price controls to protect consumers, and in particular black consumers, against the inflationary tendencies of war, followed a little later by similar protections for the commercial sector, hoping to protect the emerging industries of the colony from the steeply rising input costs occasioned by the war. His boldest move, however, was the nationalisation of Rhodesia's only steel manufacturer, which at that time was owned primarily by South Africa's ISCOR corporation. Again, his objective was to protect the supply of raw materials to Rhodesia's own emerging industries, arguing that if ISCOR should temporarily withdraw production to concentrate on its domestic market, which under wartime expediencies it might easily do, it would strangle many local enterprises at the moment of their birth.

The government approached ISCOR, but lengthy negotiations, in the end, came to nothing. Huggins then put before the House a bill providing for an ultimate appeal to the High Court if an accommodation could not be reached with the South Africans. Against significant opposition, he argued that a colony like Southern Rhodesia, with its formative manufacturing industry, should process its primary products under public control. Private capital could then use state manufactured raw materials to benefit themselves and the country at large. The bill empowered the government to acquire the Bulawayo works, and run them via a public board in a similar manner to the Electricity Supply and the Cold Storage Commissions. This decision was borne out sometime later when the industry expanded to include the Rhodesian Iron and Steel Corporation, or RISCO, which was founded in 1942.

The Cabinet then went on to review taxes. Applying the rather ethical principle that no man should profit from a clash of arms, Huggins introduced an excess profits tax that enriched the treasury but served to wipe out much of the profit that businessmen and manufacturers had hoped to accrue from the war boom. The gold industry was targeted with a similar gold premiums tax, that was perhaps a little unfair since the boom was mostly in base minerals and not precious metals. Tobacco farmers also paid a special tax, although they did not suffer price controls on the auction floor, besides which their gorging on profits was unstoppable anyway for the time being.

Under these stresses, it was not surprising that Huggins' support base slowly began to crumble. Many men in important sectors could not

understand why the Prime Minister had gone to war against the breadwinners and architects of the nation's prosperity. Finance Minister Jacob Smit, an Afrikaner shopkeeper and as uncompromising a right-wing bitter-ender as could be found anywhere, was dismayed by the government's apparent swing to the left. Through the grapevine, he warned the Prime Minister of the possible consequences and made it plain that he felt Huggins had become a danger to both his country and his party.

Smit was a perfect example of a wartime appointment. The best men were riding the desert sands with the 7th Armoured Division, spanking the Jerrys in the Long Range Desert Group, streaking across the skies in Spitfires or seated at the controls of long-range bombers over Germany. To run the government, he was left with the likes of Smit, who he hated, and who hated him. Soon after appointing him to the Cabinet, Huggins realised he could not stand the sight of him, and with his usual candour made no secret of the fact. A cold war of sorts then began to characterise the office of the treasury and the executive, infecting the entire cabinet with a degree of obstructionism and infighting that caused the economic boat to slip its moorings.

Huggins, however, fought a good fight, and ultimately held his own. Coming under attack from a variety of quarters, he was surrounded by malcontents as keen to obstruct one another as to thwart him. The result was that most of his Cabinet choices were made with a mind either to appease one or other pressure group or just out of desperation, which had the effect of further loosening his grip on the affairs of state. It was in this tight corner that he invited two prominent members of the Labour Party, Jack Keller and Harry Davis, to occupy the offices of Labour and Internal Affairs respectively. While hoping to nip a left-wing rebellion in the bud, what he actually achieved was to open an ideological split in the left wing that had not been previously observed.

Labour happened to be divided between opposing versions of the same theme. The white working classes subscribed to socialism solely in regards to preserving the rights of white workers, and they were virulently racist as a consequence. Then there were the left-wing intellectuals of a more Fabian orientation, who pondered race policy from an intellectual-liberal standpoint, while in no danger whatsoever. It stood to reason, therefore, that neither extreme wing would meet in the same party on friendly terms. By inviting Labour into the cabinet, therefore, Huggins

inadvertently widened this breach, prompting a new squabble between those who supported participation in government and those who did not.

While this might under different circumstances have played into his hands, in mid-term, and in the middle of a war, he needed strength and unity to govern, not a divided opposition with one foot in and one foot out. This situation might well have been extremely perilous for the Prime Minister had it not been for a fortunately timed eruption of labour unrest on the Copperbelt. In his response to a sudden call for help from the government of Northern Rhodesia, Huggins was able to show that although he might have been down, he was not by any means out.

The incident was interesting inasmuch as it presented another of those uniquely Rhodesian ideological conundrums. In 1942, the General Secretary of the Northern Rhodesian Mine Workers Union, a certain Frank Maybank, formed an alliance with a group of Afrikaans speaking labour unionists who were supporters of the *Ossewabrandwag*, a South African fascist organisation bitterly opposed to South African engagement on the Allied side. A strike was threatened, and in the nature of things, the force available to the administration to put any labour action down was black. While the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, Sir Eubule John Waddington, was naturally anxious not to interrupt copper production, he was also clearly wary of throwing black troops against white strikers, and in particular militant Afrikaner strikers. He had observed the trials and travails of Jan Smuts at the hands of similarly militant, nationalist white workers, and if he used black troops to arrest these men, the result could well have been a reversal of the very narrow majority that brought South Africa into the war. This the Imperial Government could certainly not afford.

Huggins received a plea for help from Government House in Lusaka and saved the day by sending north a detachment of the white Southern Rhodesian Armoured Car Unit. The patrol effectively neutralised the rising and expedited the deportation of the ringleaders. While this incident served to bolster Huggins' image abroad, it also somewhat added to lingering suspicions against him on the part of the militant white labour lobbies of Southern Rhodesia itself.

Despite this, few whites in Rhodesia did not fundamentally like Huggins, and even fewer did he not like in return. The handful of pariahs, however, of whom Jacob Smit was one, he tolerated with very poor grace. When the unity experiment with labour fell apart, he found himself facing a

sudden threat to his government, not from the left wing as he might have supposed, but rather the right. In response to the Prime Minister's determination to press on with his economic controls, an angry Jacob Smit broke away from the United Party to form a new ultra-right-wing political alliance that, in the pantomime of uniquely misnamed political parties in Rhodesia, was called the Liberal Party.

Smit thought he had read Huggins sufficiently well to gamble on dissolution. He judged the country ready for change, and with the twin issues of Huggins' slide into socialism and the unregulated flood of blacks into the cities, he felt confident of his platform. Huggins, of course, would not be coerced into a general election, and as a son of England, he knew a thing or two that an Anglophobe Afrikaner did not. He raised his voice above the hubris and disorder and appealed directly to the country for a show of patriotism. Although starting to wear a little thin, this was a strategy that still worked surprisingly well. Smit might not have automatically understood the subtleties of royalism and British nationalism, but with the war moving towards its climax, and most of the working men of the country abroad, an election would have been out of the question anyway. Huggins outflanked Smit without difficulty, after which the latter was forced to resume his seat on the backbenches and reflect bitterly on a prime minister who was considerably more cunning than he appeared.

While for the time being Huggins slipped the noose, he was nonetheless aware that the end of the war would certainly demand political change, and an election would be unavoidable then. In the interim, therefore, he got to grips with the task of arresting the decline of his personal popularity before he could attend to the business of reuniting his crumbling party. He began by filling the vacant office of treasurer, replacing Smit with his old friend Max Danziger. Having proved by then that he was a reasonable economic strategist, the day-to-day business of fiscal management was clearly beyond him. Danziger was also a man more on Huggins' intellectual level, and believing that one could do no better than placing a Jew in charge of the treasury, he put Danziger to work.

In the meanwhile, a brawny backcountry rancher by the name of Raymond Stockil soon superseded Jacob Smit in the leadership of the Liberal Party. Stockil was a fairly typical product of Southern Rhodesia. He had gathered broad experience in mining and ranching, to the extent that by the end of the war he was among a small clique of wealthy and influential

farmer-capitalists who made up an important parliamentary faction. Huggins, on the other hand, with his dislike of cabinet reshuffles, was left surrounded by the tired old drudges of the United Party who were manifestly unequal to a significant electoral campaign.

It was fortunate, therefore, that, at that particular moment, a certain Colonel G.H. Walker, D.S.O, suggested to the Labour Party that black participation in the alliance was now essential and that the party would commence a search for prospective black MPs. This promptly plunged labour into another round of bitter infighting, pitting the intellectual liberals against the labour unionists, and soon afterwards the party fall apart. By 1946 it had ceased to be an active threat, and Huggins was at last in a position to concentrate his attention on the Liberal Party, and it did not take him long to identify two glaring contradictions in the party manifesto.

Most importantly, the Liberals picked as a battle cry the demand for dominion status. As we have heard, this idea was granted significant momentum after the inauguration of the Empire Air Training Scheme, and throughout the war, strong hints emanated from Whitehall that dominion status would indeed be given to Rhodesia as a reward for her exemplary contribution to empire defence. Now that the war was over, expectations were running very high. There can also be no doubt that a strong motivation existed in London to be faithful to the promise, but things had changed. India was about to gain her independence, Churchill's signature was on the Atlantic Charter, and the global expectation in the aftermath of the war simply could not accommodate the continued status of minority rule in any colony. Those days were past, and whatever might have been hinted at or suggested, the growing body of free nations represented in General Assembly of the United Nations were gathering in strength. As much as it might have riled the sensibilities of the traditionalists, the likes of Ethiopia and Liberia now carried more moral weight than Britain, and they all said no.

The Liberals, however, went further still, and demanded an end to the imperial veto, and the granting of rights to the Parliament of Southern Rhodesia to legislate on behalf of the blacks. There was simply no possibility that Whitehall either would, or could grant dominion status to Southern at that moment, and certainly not under a more restrictive and unpredictable native policy than already existed. Demanding both, therefore, was amateurish and self-defeating, and Huggins made a

significant point of exposing this fact. The second issue was the Liberal espousal of ‘unbridled’ capitalism while at the same time demanding state ownership of such industries as the Wankie coalfields and the railways. These contradictions helped Huggins expose the Liberal Party as a dilettante alliance of loudmouthed amateurs thumping the table.

All this notwithstanding, Huggins and the United Party barely survived the 1946 general election. The Prime Minister himself comfortably retained his seat, but his party suffered a series of defeats. The Liberals made an almost clean sweep of the rural constituencies and cut deep inroads into the urban vote. Even Huggins’ neighbouring constituency of Avondale fell. It was a very close run thing, but the United Party nonetheless held on to power with thirteen seats against the Liberal Party’s twelve. Labour collected five, but then promptly split along familiar lines into the right-wing Rhodesia Labour Party with three seats, and the liberal-intellectual Southern Rhodesia Labour Party with two. A recount helped Huggins a little with the removal of one seat from the Liberals, but despite this, Huggins found himself balanced on a knife-edge, knowing that hard times lay ahead.

9
The Natives Come of Age

The last World War did not teach the subject peoples the spirit of independence. This was already there. People had long felt the poignant injustice of subordination and discrimination. They had no means hitherto of vocalising and dramatising their deep-seated grievances. World War II focused these grievances more intensely and gave them an effective expression – **The Reverend George Gay**

A young black student studying for an honours degree at Fort Hare University in South Africa submitted an essay on the circumstances of the black race. In it, he quoted from Booker T Washington's Atlanta Compromise address. "No race that has learned to contribute to the markets of the world is in the long run ostracised."

That student was Stanlake Samkange, the eldest son of Grace and the Reverend Thompson Samkange, and his return to Rhodesia with one of the first university degrees to be won by a native of the country marked the end of the beginning. Other gifted and accomplished young blacks would follow, and from among them the leadership of the future political struggle would be selected. These were the Young Turks, who understood modern life and modern politics, and were unintimidated by the conditions of life and industry in post-war Rhodesia. They owed the white man nothing and were content to demand that he pack up and leave the country, taking him with him all of his increasingly racist social and political institutions. These young men were backed up by the tens of thousands of young black servicemen returning home from war, inspired by Indian independence, and astonished that none of the high ideals for which they fought were ever intended to apply to them. The white man, it was said, when he returned from the war, was given a farm. The black man, when he returned from the same war, was given a bicycle.

Stanlake Samkange's honours degree was a triumph that was brought about only through immense personal sacrifice. Nevertheless, he was to find, as he took up his first political office as secretary of the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress, that in the short term at least, Booker T Washington was mistaken. The work that blacks were doing and the contribution they were making to the wealth of the minority proved that it

was indeed possible for a race to contribute to the markets of the world and still be ostracised. Ndabaningi Sithole, emerging from his own higher education, and forming his own revolutionary ideas, saw the situation thus:

> On examination, the basic ingredients that go to make up the present African nationalism may be enumerated as the African's desire to participate fully in the central government of the country; his desire for economic justice that recognises fully the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' regardless of the colour of the skin; his desire to have full political rights in his own country; his dislike of being treated as a stranger in the land of his birth; his dislike of being treated as means for the white man's end; and his dislike of the laws of the country that prescribe for him a permanent position of inferiority as a human being.

It is hard to believe that in just one generation of available education, a black man had emerged in Rhodesia capable of articulating his condition so succinctly. Both Stanlake Samkange and Ndabaningi Sithole at that point bore favourable comparison to the great survivors and achievers of the black race such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T Washington himself. It is also interesting to note that the first black Rhodes Scholar was not an African, but American Howard University philosopher Alain Locke, one of the most significant figures of the Harlem Renaissance. If any whites had cared to notice the rise of the black intelligentsia, there would have been as much amazement as concern.

Ndabaningi Sithole was born in 1920 into humble circumstances in the Matabeleland district of Nyamandhlovu. Mostly self-educated, with some assistance from the Wesleyans and the Methodists, he attended the Newton Theological College near Boston Massachusetts where he studied theology for three years. Back in Rhodesia he was ordained at the Mount Selinda Congregationalist Church and began work as a school principal. At the same time he set to work on his sweeping political thesis, 'African Nationalism', which would form the bedrock of the nationalist ideals of the three decades to follow.

With Samkange, Sithole and many others to inspire them, young blacks were increasingly sensing that in education lay the key to emancipation. While the gifted few were enjoying the sponsorship of the churches, many more were benefiting from improved native primary school

education, and increasingly during the 1940s, secondary education too. By the mid-1940s, 100,000 black children in the country were estimated to be experiencing some level of tuition. Annually there were potentially more black job seekers flooding the labour market than there were whites in the entire colony, with many of these making their way into industry and commerce.

By the end of the war, no fewer than 20,000 blacks were formally employed in urban industries, with a further undisclosed number engaged on farms and in domestic service. In black urban settlements on the fringes of the cities, squatter communities and urban slums grew with alarming speed. The ambiguity of white attitudes to this was born out by the fact that no formal policy framework existed upon which to respond to it. The government was officially in denial, and thus wholly paralysed, allowing social conditions for urban blacks to steadily deteriorate.

Indeed, the emergence of an urban class of working blacks was as swift as the growth of industry itself. A generation of blacks was plunged into the wage-earning economy and, for the first time, were influenced by such civilising factors as the cost of living. This alerted more of them than ever to the reality that whites were rich and they were poor. The conditions under which they were forced to live and the pass laws that governed every moment of their waking lives stood in stark contrast to the liberties and lifestyles of their white Rhodesian compatriots.

Whites, by and large, maintained that, under the provisions of the Land Apportionment Act, the cities were their exclusive preserve. Blacks were to be tolerated only on a temporary basis and only if they could prove employment by whites. It became apparent, however, that a crisis was in the making and the Native Problem began to intrude directly on the lives of urban whites. Blacks were now impossible to ignore, and for the first time whites could see the native condition with their very own eyes, and the sheer numbers involved were frightening.

In 1941, Huggins published what he called his ‘Statement on Native Policy’ in Southern Rhodesia. It is uncertain why he felt moved at that particular moment to define a policy that was in such rapid evolution, but in doing so, he stressed one or two specific points. He stated, for example, that the blacks were not obliged to come to the cities if they did not want to and that sufficient resources existed to sustain them in the native reserves. The irony, however, is that Huggins probably knew next to nothing about the

native reserves. These designated areas, he observed, could support black clerks, nurses, interpreters, artisans and schoolteachers. The towns, on the other hand, like the European farms, were sacred, and the white communities they nourished inviolate. He deviated from the hard-line only once, to admit that the lines of separate development might not remain separate forever.

What this comment might have meant at the time was anybody's guess, but like everybody else, Huggins was probably finally coming to grips with the reality of what was taking place around him. While this might have been his public position, in private he tended to be more pragmatic. A storm was gathering that demanded an immediate overhaul of defences, but although he began with increasing frequency to make the point that separate development had become unworkable, neither he nor anybody else really seemed to be able to come up with a practical alternative.

Huggins' eventual response in 1944 was to appoint a commission under the chairmanship of retired Provincial Native Commissioner, E.G. Howman. Howman was mandated to investigate economic, social, and health conditions of blacks in the urban areas. Taking evidence from across the country, he produced a report that stunned even those who felt they 'knew' blacks.

Approaching white industrialists first he discovered that most agreed that some sort of change was inevitable, although most were divided on what form this change should take. Productivity relied on labour stability, and labour stability depended on the ability of the blacks to feel settled in the cities. The principle that blacks were to reside temporarily in white areas while maintaining their permanent homes in the reserves was proving too costly for both industry and the blacks themselves to sustain. Low wages paid in the past had been based on the belief that cash for blacks was 'pocket money', while the real source of their sustenance was wives and children who scratched the soil of diminishing and impoverished plots on the reserves.

Things had changed from the old days, however. Blacks were now faced with many day-to-day expenses that more often than not made it uneconomical for them to work. Bearing in mind that their homes in the cities were not permanent, transport to and from the reserves was very costly. The material expectation of friends and relatives at home also impacted on the cost of working. Urban rentals were unregulated, and

therefore extortionate. It was difficult for a worker to maintain his loyalty to a particular employer under such circumstances, and difficult for employers to keep workers at work. All this came at a substantial cost in lost productivity to commerce, farming and industry, and caused spiralling poverty among blacks.

On the social impact of slum dwelling, Howman reported that poverty was widespread, and the threat of disease and social disintegration imminent. “Segregation”, he observed, “has not only tended to suppress family life, but to place the most strenuous obstacles in the way of those who have sought to set up homes in the urban areas and the consequences ramify into every field of the economic, industrial, moral and social order.”

Huggins’ reply was resigned. In November 1944 he told the House: “We have to realise that a permanent urban class is arising and is bound to grow in the future unless the people in the European towns are prepared to manage without any black assistance, and the time has passed when that might have been possible, so we must face the facts as they are.”

Privately he responded with caution. Most importantly, he altered the Land Apportionment Act to make it mandatory for local councils to provide housing for black workers in the towns. Previously this had been merely permitted, but never mandatory. This measure, however, was counterbalanced by stricter pass regulations and tighter controls over the movements of blacks outside the reserves. There was no suggestion then of overhauling the Land Apportionment Act, and no evidence that any white man in the country was yet prepared to countenance it.

In the meanwhile, before new legislation, in the form of the ‘Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation Act of 1946’, could be published, an incident occurred which drew attention to the other pressing problem facing black workers, the question of low and unequal wages. On Monday 22 October 1945, in one of the first incidents of its kind in Southern Rhodesia, the 2,400 African workers employed by Rhodesia Railways in Bulawayo came out on strike.[5] The action was spontaneous, poorly organised and it only lasted a few days, but Huggins took the warning very seriously. He appointed his friend and confidante, Minister of Justice and former Minister of Defence Robert Tredgold, to the chair of a house commission briefed to look into not only worker’s demands but also their general conditions of living and employment. Tredgold in due course produced a report that

betrayed his amazement at the extent of a problem that hitherto he had no idea existed. An extract from his report illustrates this clearly:

> In its heyday, which was back in the early years of the century, the compound could not have been a particularly attractive residential provision. For the most part it consists of ill-lit and ill-ventilated barrack type rows of rooms. Now 2,173 African men and women are housed in accommodation which officially should house 1,450. Latrine and bathing provision is inadequate. Save in one section of the compound, there is no provision for cooking, which is done for the most part on homemade braziers in the open. Cooking in wet weather must be very difficult. Men and women are crowded in rooms without regard to hygiene or decency. For example, we found six males, three females and four children occupying one room 15 ft. X 17 ft. 9 in. X 11 ft. 6 in. high. This was by no means exceptional. In an attempt to gain a little privacy, partitions of old sacking or rags are erected which further reduce the light and ventilation. It is a miracle that no serious epidemic has originated here.

Two years later, a visiting South African government official J.P. McNamee, with plenty of his own examples to draw on, published this observation of black living conditions in Bulawayo: “Some years ago, Sir Edgar Thornton, of the Union Department of Public Health, described a certain area situated immediately outside the boundaries of Port Elizabeth as ‘the worst slum in the world.’ He might well have qualified that statement had he seen the conditions of some of the shanty settlements in Bulawayo's industrial area.”

Tredgold recommended an immediate wage increase, and in a private letter to Huggins, further urged the government to deal aggressively with the reality of black urbanisation. A year later the government responded by drafting the ‘Native Labour Board Act’ to create machinery to deal with labour disputes specifically as they affected the blacks. Predictably, and perhaps justifiably, blacks and liberal whites interpreted this as yet another version of white superintendentship, for it did not offer an alternative to, or compensate for collective bargaining as a tool to equalise wages.

In 1943, a leadership change in the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress took place that would help set the tone for the more radical years to come. The SRBC was a native political organisation established in 1934 by purchase area farmer Aaron Jacha, and like many other proto-liberation movements founded in the British colonies, it was initially inspired by the Indian Congress Party. In more recent years, it had grown moribund, due mainly, perhaps, to its preoccupation with the concerns of the current black elite. Most of its members belonged to that first generation of nominally educated black men who by the mid-1940s were beginning to age. Most of them tended to cling to the insistence that white domination could not reasonably be challenged, and must instead be managed. The leader of the organisation, Solomon Chavunduka, was an excellent example of what many among the younger and better educated felt was wrong. Indeed, the youth wing of Congress was deeply offended in April 1942 when Chavunduka commented thus in a speech:

> The European introduces the civilisation to the African and shows him the civilizational ladder, he asks him to come along behind him on the ladder, the African puts his foot on the first step and probably on the second, but the power of his ancestral environment pulls him back, so he discontinues his journey. The European looks behind and finds that his African brother is sitting, he gets disappointed and gives up hope.

Chavunduka was ousted soon afterwards, and the Reverend Thompson Samkange was appointed to replace him. Samkange's leadership, however, was also doomed, because he likewise tended to represent the respectable face of black nationalism. Nonetheless, in one vital area, his political philosophy did differ from that of his predecessor. He believed that the future success of African nationalism lay in the unification of the many separate voices that were then forming the character of African resistance. The focus of his efforts would be to unite that resistance under the single umbrella of Congress. Unity would after that be the catchword and the elusive grail of active nationalism. In his private communications with future Malawian leader Hastings Banda, Samkange was congratulated for being able to speak for all the blacks of Southern Rhodesia, although how Banda formed this impression, it is difficult to say. In stressing it, however,

he did lay claim to the truism that a house divided cannot stand. Both men clearly recognised that African society, not only in Southern Rhodesia or Nyasaland but continent-wide, was apt to lend itself perfectly to the imperial policy of divide and rule.

Meanwhile, the Young Turks trickling out of regional and foreign universities felt no such awe for the white man. For them, the 1940s was an exciting period of political mobilisation and awareness. Stanlake Samkange's triumphal return from Fort Hare University in 1947 was cause for national celebration, and the black circulation *Bantu Mirror* reported the event enthusiastically. Young blacks were energised by their emerging political awareness and inspired by messages drifting down from the north. They heard the words of Booker T Washington, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. du Bois and many other black American intellectuals, some who had once called for Pan African unity and freedom, and others who were still calling for it.

Fort Hare University, a South African all-black institute situated in the Eastern Cape, turned out a steady stream of black nationalists. When he attended the university in 1949, Robert Mugabe found the campus awash with airs of freedom and nationalism. He was exposed for the first time to Marxism and the Gandhian philosophy of *Satyagraha,* or the confrontation of tyranny with non-violence and non-cooperation. The political life on campus was dominated by the likes of Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Gatsha Buthelezi. Mugabe entered the university as a humble schoolteacher, but he emerged three years later as a powerfully motivated black nationalist.

The 1940s was also a period when black political expression slipped from the grasp of the intellectuals and became the property of the masses. The main issues of the time for those educated few remained the franchise and the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, but although these questions carried a strong moral appeal for men like Sithole, Mugabe and the younger Samkange, they were not the stuff of mass mobilisation. The ordinary people brooded over more fundamental issues such as wages, living conditions, pass laws, forced removals and the land question.

The latter, indeed, probably provided the elusive catalyst for the establishment of a mass movement. The new, educated elite was there to provide the technical leadership, and the demobilised servicemen of WWII the foot soldiers, but it would not be until the common people, the masses, the *povo* felt an identity with the struggle that they would begin to commit

to it. The post-War period was one of enormous movement from Europe to the colonies. Most of the greater populations of all of the dominions were accumulated at this time, as men returned from the war to face the post-war gloom of labour governments. At that point, the sunshine of the colonies appeared very attractive indeed. Thanks to the Empire Air Training Scheme, many came to Southern Rhodesia, and to accommodate those interested in agriculture, generous conditions for acquiring land were offered, and to make that land available, blacks were forcibly moved off it. It was this more than anything that sowed the seeds of that enduring hatred for the white man felt by the black man, and it was this that drove the uncommitted peasants and the rural masses into the arms of the nationalists.

On a bright and pleasant spring morning in 1948, Bulawayo commuters were suddenly confronted by scenes such as had not been seen since the 1890s. From out of the locations an army of blacks waving knobkerries, metal pipes and bicycle chains began to move through the early morning rush hour traffic. Their objective initially was to beat up and harass any fellow blacks who appeared to be on their way to work. Cars with blacks in them were mobbed, and their occupants dragged out. Moving through the residential precincts, they entered houses to take away black servants who were given a sharp reminder of whose side they ought to be on. Some armed whites stood guard over their homes, but most stepped back and watched with awe. Few whites were directly assaulted, although the *New Rhodesian* newspaper carried a report of an incident in downtown Bulawayo where a white motorist trying to force his way through a mob blocking the road was dragged from his car and assaulted. Writer and historian Peter Gibbs described in his fictional account of the strike, *Stronger than Armies*, the moment when his hero confronts the truth:

> Phillip walked confidently up to the leaders and called, ‘get outside the gate!’ It was only necessary to command natives firmly and they obeyed. The little native held his ground. ‘We will go very soon, baas’ he said, ‘but first we must take the baas’s cook who is working. We will not hurt the baas or his missus – not this time. That will come one day,’ he added gratuitously. This was the first expression of hostility to his race that Philip had heard in his twenty years in the country. He was to look back at this moment as the split second in time when the world he knew entered a new era.

Most whites, although conscious in an abstract way of growing discontent, were entirely taken by surprise by these events. The black political leadership had, of course, been in touch with developments, but efforts to form a coordinated response had not been successful. Late in 1947, a few white employers in Bulawayo received circulars from their employees demanding a rise in wages, but few took any notice. Then, sometime in October, unknown to them or the city council, a significant meeting of black municipal employees took place behind closed doors. The Labour Board was loudly condemned, and it was resolved that strike action would be called if no satisfactory response to their demands was given.

White employers naturally refused to be badgered by their black labour, although a roundtable meeting was held in Salisbury between various chambers of commerce, employers organisations and municipalities, which, as well as also criticising the Labour Board, undertook to settle wage disputes. On 7 April, the *Bulawayo Chronicle* carried a loosely worded version of their terms that were vague enough to be misunderstood and ambiguous enough to be misapplied. The announcement was either ignored or rejected, and tension in the Bulawayo townships continued to rise. Three days later, Congress held a meeting in Gwelo to try and limit growing factionalism. It was imperative that any action be credited to Congress as the authentic voice of the people. This failed for many reasons, the most important being perhaps that the organisation was staffed by intellectuals, and run by young blacks whose primary preoccupied seemed to be to appear accomplished and learned.

The Reverend Samkange was forced to concede that neither he nor anyone else in Congress, nor for that matter in any other organisation, spoke for the majority of blacks. An increasingly desperate series of labour meetings and widespread calls for restraint came to nothing. No single organisation was able to claim control of the strike, and when it erupted, the most than any of them could do was climb aboard and shout the loudest in the hope that theirs would be the voice accredited with responsibility.

In the end, the Bulawayo disturbance quickly evaporated, but its reverberations spread to other urban centres. Forewarned, however, the authorities clamped down, and the violent scenes of the previous weeks were not repeated. Huggins responded with a show of force, although he also quickly promised a review of wages. For the time being, calm returned, but calls by nervous whites for ‘a whiff of grapeshot’ remained loud and

insistent. Many whites would soberly reflect on those weeks as the turning point of a new era, and indeed, without a doubt, they were.

And indeed, it was not only the whites who felt this epochal stirring of black anger. A contemplative Thompson Samkange, in his resignation speech of July of the following year, remarked thus: “We experienced in recent months a grave disaster in the widespread industrial disturbances. It is a warning that the new order of things has arisen in the colony of which [we] are warned by the Railway African strike – Africans are awakening!”

Africans were indeed awakening, and whites were suddenly acutely aware of the fact. Huggins tried to pacify his electorate. “Our experience is not unique,” he told them, “we are witnessing the emergence of the proletariat and in this country it just happens to be black.” To those demanding retribution, he recalled the days of showdowns with British labour. Any confrontation with Rhodesian labour would directly send the majority, who were migrant labour, back out of the country, and the rest back to their homes in the reserves. Where would that leave Rhodesian industry and commerce? This was a new reality, and he urged his fellow Europeans to face the facts, and behave accordingly.

Mostly hidden from the majority, a small group of whites had indeed for some time been trying to change perceptions on the race question. This was perhaps a local manifestation of a general lean to the left that was reflected globally and had much to do with the experience of war. Many battle-scarred sons of Rhodesia returned home after that experience with a clear sense of the consequences of repression and a revived interest in addressing the race issue. Hardwicke Holderness and his childhood friend Pat Lewis were two such men.

By the late 1940s, it was becoming clear that the Native Problem had developed from a social into a political phenomenon, and was growing daily in scope and complexity. As it observed from a distance, the only solution that the white establishment seemed to offer was ever more rigorous containment and repression. The window of opportunity of the late 1920s and early 1930s, for blacks to be introduced into the administration on ‘white’ terms, and without an overt political agenda, had long been squandered. Educated blacks now had no interest in collaboration. The country was booming, immigrants were flooding in, and both blacks and whites were prospering. Beneath the boom, however, a mood of deep pessimism continued to affect both races. By then, the goodwill of old had

become so profoundly imperilled that to many there seemed no real chance that a community of interests could ever be achieved.

In 1946 Holderness, Lewis and a few others of like mind founded an informal society they called the ‘Rhodesia National Affairs Association’. The Association began by holding casual lunch hour lectures in Salisbury designed to mould and inform public opinion. The initial sessions were well attended and explored subjects pertaining loosely to race relations. One lecture entitled ‘The native as a human being’ was delivered by the missionary Garfield Todd, of whom a great deal more will be heard. Another was entitled ‘The various two-pyramid policies’. Other subjects including education, agriculture, the franchise, conservation and health in the native reserves, were examined and expanded upon by a variety of local experts.

In the close personal atmosphere of politics in Salisbury, the Association was careful to keep discussions reasonable and friendly. Holderness, however, tested the waters a little more deeply when in 1948 he invited Gideon Mhlanga, schoolmaster at the new Goromonzi native secondary school to deliver a lecture. Mhlanga was the first native of Southern Rhodesia to earn a university degree and, although he was perceived as a moderate, the organisers felt some apprehension. No one could say for sure how a white audience would react to being addressed by a black man and, more unpredictable still was what that black man might be tempted to say. The organisers employed some discreet security in the form of ex-heavyweight boxer Dave Linton who would be standing by in case of trouble. After that, they threw open the doors and hoped for the best.

Mhlanga chose as the subject of his lecture the story of how he had acquired his degree, which was only completed when he was over forty-years-old. To an audience brought up on accessible education, the tale was a sobering one. It was the usual chronicle of a black child struggling to sustain any level of instruction, and of his trials as an adult paying for or begging a higher education in South Africa. In relating his experiences, he avoided militant language and maintained an attitude of humility and respect. As Holderness closed a chapter on this subject in his memoir, he had this to say:

“How much we or the rest of the audience appreciated at the time the extent to which he was giving to white Rhodesians the benefit of the

doubt is hard to say. The audience applauded enthusiastically, and that seemed fair enough."

Emboldened by Gideon Mhlanga's reception, the National Affairs Association then took the experiment into the locations. The first lecture, delivered to a full house of township blacks, was on the subject of pre-colonial history, and it was received with interest and appreciation. The second lecture, however, followed the same topic into the post-colonial period, and this was greeted by an altogether different response. As the speaker traced essential themes of conquest and villainy, gasps of dismay escaped the lips of his audience. When the presentation was over the floor was opened to questions. Questions, however, were not questions at all, but lengthy polemics delivered by proud men who were heir to an entirely different view of history.

Indeed, the white man's version of the recent past fell like hot lead on black ears. It was as hard for them to sit and listen to the white man's achievements being eulogised as it was for whites to hear them derided. The gap was just too wide, and there was no universal appreciation of events. The experiment was deemed a failure, and the township lectures were suspended. The National Affairs Association then retreated to safer themes and venues. Godfrey Huggins might have chewed on his pipe stem, and chuckled as he sipped his Scotch at the deep end of the Salisbury Club. He had warned them all along that it was a waste of time trying to stitch a suppurating wound, and he was right.

10
Immigration and Politics

There are many humorous things in the world; among them, the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages – **Mark Twain**

The gravity of the race crisis was widely perceived, and from many quarters came many suggestions. One such quarter was Edgar Whitehead, Member of Parliament for Umtali, and a gentleman farmer in the honourable and military tradition. His proposal was simply to throw open the gates of the colony to unrestricted white immigration. Indeed, there was no crime in exclusivity, but in a war of sheer numbers, it was hardly the ideal weapon. Much of what made race a problem in Southern Rhodesia was the unease with which the white man regarded his minority. If white numbers could be quickly and substantially increased, then the entire premise of the Native Problem would evaporate. Also, more whites would mean more skills and more capital, which in turn would mean more jobs and happier blacks.

It was the perfect solution, although it had to be borne in mind that Britain's human resources were finite so the net would need to cast more widely than just England. The colony could compromise a little, and recruit immigrants from the many hundreds of thousands of European refugees and war orphans, who could comfortably be housed, albeit temporarily, in the old Empire Air Training Scheme facilities. From there they could be integrated and introduced incrementally into the economy of the territory.

However, in the end, white Rhodesian conservatism proved stronger than it's fear. Although the idea was cautiously accepted, it was whittled down to such an extent that it soon had no relevance at all. Whites in general either did not acknowledge that blacks were an imminent threat, or they felt that the risk of allowing impoverished whites into the colony was greater. In truth the scheme was quixotic, and it would not be the last time that Whitehead would prove himself prone to tilting at windmills.

Nonetheless, post-war arrivals came, and they came in numbers. From about 65,000 before the war, the white population of the colony surged towards its peak of nearly 300,000 in the late 1960s. Although this accelerated rate of immigration posed no threat to the blacks in terms of numbers, it did help the whites to put aside their woes and concentrate on a

booming economy, and a fantastic social revival. This wave of immigration, however, tended to consist of urban, middle-class artisans and professionals escaping the sheer dross of Labour Britain. This was not what the establishment would have wished, but it nonetheless shaped the character of white society in Southern Rhodesia for the next phase of its history.

Things, however, had not always been that way. In 1946, for example, the government introduced the 'Aliens Act' to further reinforce the exclusivity of immigration, which to many seemed as good as trading the long-term future of the white man in Southern Rhodesia for a few more years of that lovely imperial dream. Thirty years hence white Rhodesia would welcome non-black immigrants from anywhere, even India, but in the late 1940s, the white political landscape seemed to stretch forth into the future without a single black blot on it anywhere.

One person who effortlessly met Southern Rhodesian immigration criteria was Clifford Dupont. A rather petite, Brilliantined Englishman of the legal profession, Dupont found the austerity of post-war England particularly trying. His gregarious manners, charm, sporting nature and political conservatism made Southern Rhodesia a perfect choice for him, and he an ideal choice for Rhodesia. Of Huguenot lineage, he read law at Cambridge and was a commissioned officer of the Royal Artillery. He served in North Africa before being transferred to General Eisenhower's staff during the invasion of Europe. After the war, at forty years of age, he settled somewhat reluctantly into the routine of employment in London. Two years later, however, he had the opportunity to visit Kenya to settle the estate of Henry Kitchener, 2nd Earl Kitchener. En-route he stopped over in Southern Rhodesia, and after a week or two of pleasant junketing, unexpected encounters with old friends, distant relatives and even an old next-door neighbour, he was won over. The social life of the colony he found charming, the countryside beautiful and the frenzy of life and activity stimulating. Hundreds of others were arriving in the country daily, and Dupont decided then and there to do the same.

In Salisbury, he met up with a legal contact who interested him in the purchase of the Mayfair Hotel, situated on the corner of Fifth Street and Selous Avenue. The Mayfair was a substantial property selling for the reasonable price of £18,000. In a city awash with capital, Dupont was impressed at how easy it was for him to secure a loan, and before he had even settled in the colony, he found himself the owner of a large

commercial property. Quite clearly Clifford Dupont was a man ideally suited to life in Southern Rhodesia.

Early in 1948, he returned with his family, and to his surprise, discovered that conditions in Salisbury had changed considerably in his absence. The immigration boom had overtaken him, and the country was overflowing with demobilised Britons trying to settle in. A chronic housing shortage meant that hotels accepted bookings for only four days at a time, which meant that new arrivals moved from hotel to hotel in four day-cycles, usually ending up at the Coronation Park camping grounds in a caravan, or under canvas. In that year alone, Dupont was one of 17,000 immigrants who arrived looking for a new life in the colony. The infrastructure groaned, and old-timers reaped windfall profits by dividing and subdividing plots of land into stands and suburbs. Most of the newcomers concentrated in the cities and, as a consequence, the growth of housing and industrial infrastructure simply could not keep pace with the demand.

This was the sort of problem, however, that Godfrey Huggins welcomed. To cope with it, he formed a National Housing Board that came up with some creative accommodation solutions. One of these was to make use of the ‘rammed earth’ or *pise de terre* system whereby houses were built of clay stamped into moulds and finished with stucco. These were assembled rapidly, and for a brief season became a common feature of the urban landscape. They were reasonably comfortable and allowed the various municipalities time to survey and map out new suburbs. Huggins’ response to complaints, and there were plenty of them, was as typical as it was indifferent. They were, after all, he remarked, better than the Governor General’s palace in Khartoum.

Clifford Dupont was probably luckier than most, for as a professional he was not pressed for funds. He found a half-built house in the neighbourhood of Lochinvar that he managed to acquire reasonably cheaply. Soon wearying of life as a hotelier, he noticed that the local social aristocracy tended to congregate in the outlying farming communities, where polo and gin-slings recalled the acme of imperial life in India. He promptly hired a farm manager and told him to go out and find a farm. In due course, he was shown a 2,000-acre property south of Salisbury, for which he reasonably easily raised the money. Over the years he added to the property and, in time, became something of a local personality. Entering politics via the Liberal Party, he followed the journey that saw the Liberals

reinvent themselves first as the Dominion Party, and then the Rhodesian Front. After that Dupont entered the cabinet and, like Huggins, became a much-loved character on the Rhodesian social and political landscape.

Still reeling from his near defeat at the hands of the Liberal Party, in the meanwhile, Godfrey Huggins seized upon the last ace that could be wrung from the old game of settlers versus the British South Africa Company. This card was the question of the railway system, the final, outstanding grievance carried over by the white community against their unloved materfamilias of old. While it was a tempting trophy, Huggins nonetheless had not forgotten for a moment that state ownership and other such diversions had been troublesome to him in the past. Over this issue, therefore, he advanced cautiously, gauging the mood of the electorate before making his intentions known. He was on solid ground, however, for public feeling in favour of state ownership of the railways was unmistakable.

Happily, also, the Board of Directors of the British South Africa Company turned out to be willing to sell. Since the war, the Company had lost interest in the railways, mainly because the whole system was ageing and was in need of a comprehensive overhaul. The problems Huggins encountered on this occasion were not with the Company, but with an Imperial Government anxious to protect the interests of the other two partners in the system, Bechuanaland and Northern Rhodesia. Both territories relied no less than Southern Rhodesia on the integrated system, and obviously, the newly minted Labour Party in Britain regarded the Sacred Trust as very sacred indeed.

The irony of British Labour, enamoured as it was with nationalisation at home, objecting to nationalisation in the colonies was not lost on either Huggins or the Tories, and one can easily imagine the tone of informal debate around the bar of the Salisbury Club at that time. A classic case of Britannia waives the rules no doubt. Indeed, such instances of British double standards were by no means rare at the time, and nor would this be the last. In due course, however, Whitehall overcame its objections, and Southern Rhodesia was given the go-ahead to buy out the other two partners.

The united railway system was purchased for a little over £3 million, and a further £32 million was raised as a loan for covering debentures, the cost of overhauling the operation and future development.

Both Raymond Stockil and Jacob Smit howled in protest, of course, but their voices were smothered by a wave of public approval. For Huggins, it was a triumph, and with it, he was able to pack up and seal one of the most successful transactions of his premiership.

Huggins then briefly, and rather spuriously, turned his attention to another national controversy, the franchise. The Southern Rhodesian franchise remained in theory open to the equal participation of blacks, assuming they could satisfy the relevant property and educational qualifications. In the past very few had, but in recent years, blacks names had begun to appear on the common voter's role with disturbing frequency.

It was at this point that Huggins as a statesman and political leader reached a moral crossroads. By then, of course, he was fully aware that the moment to open government and the civil service safely to blacks had passed. This was not merely because blacks were now educated, and no longer welcoming of any opportunity, no matter how slight, but also because the character of the white population had also changed. The colony was no longer the redoubt of the British upper classes but was now awash with British artisans and white and blue collar workers, and with the British obsession with class and race most acutely represented among them, Southern Rhodesian settler society was now conspicuously racist. It was this class of white society who were most at risk, and it was they as a consequence who were most determined that their neighbourhoods, clubs and schools, and most importantly their places of work, would remain uncontaminated by a black presence, and undisturbed by black competition.

There were, however, still a few possible avenues of black progress, and these were mainly through the ranks of local leadership, the army, the private sector and certain professions. Freeing up the limitations of the franchise, therefore, and allowing blacks in slowly, still might have reaped the reward of genuine racial unity, but time was certainly running out. It would have taken a strong leader to achieve this, and without doubt, Huggins possessed the wherewithal to be that leader. But whether it was because of his inability to confront the magnitude of such a change, or the fact that he simply never even contemplated it, the opportunity was not seized. He instead proposed the removal of the black franchise altogether, to be replaced by two white members with no function other than to protect local black interests in an enlarged whites-only legislature.

It is perhaps surprising that Huggins chose to ignore the inbuilt contradictions in such an outdated political principal, and even more surprising that he expected it to pass the imperial veto. A possible explanation is that it was merely a political ruse. Knowing as he did that the critical point of the race issue had not quite yet been reached, it is possible that he felt it wiser to confuse the issue with subterfuge while laying the groundwork to assist the next generation of white political leadership in what would undoubtedly be their primary preoccupation. That groundwork, of course, would be the amalgamation of the region into a single, powerful and independent political bloc that would be better able to withstand the inevitable black assault against white political hegemony. To achieve this, he needed to reassert his political dominance.

That opportunity came in 1948 when his government was defeated in parliament over a trivial point of policy. The matter concerned an inter-territorial currency board vault and a handful of other related buildings to be constructed on Southern Rhodesian soil. Instrumental in its defeat was Jacob Smit, whose chief delight at the moment lay in fielding a parliamentary majority. Huggins, however, with the afterglow of the railway purchase still warm, seized the opportunity. Creating an enormous uproar in parliament over the defeat, he insisted that it represented a vote of no confidence. He furthermore demanded that the issue be run through the ballot a second time, and on this occasion, he had plenty of opportunities to ensure that his friends contributed to yet another defeat. With this achieved, and Smit uncertain of what exactly had happened, Huggins successfully petitioned the Governor for a dissolution of parliament. Thereafter he took the country to the polls for the fifth time.

To Huggins' immense satisfaction, the general election of 1948 swept Smit and the Liberal Party out of contention and returned the United Party with the most absolute majority achieved so far. Godfrey Huggins, the master political strategist, urbane, self-deprecating and pleasant to the last, triumphed once again. The United Party won twenty-four seats, the Rhodesia Labour Party one and the Liberal Party five. As the proverbial cherry on the cake, Jacob Smit lost his seat, and Huggins never again had to countenance his surly face across the floor. Huggins was now at last in a position to move forward with the cherished dream of uniting the two Rhodesias.

The general election of 1948 was, in fact, just one of three incidents that year that pushed the cause of amalgamation several steps closer. On 28 May a general election in the Union of South Africa ousted a complacent United Party under General Jan Smuts, awarding victory to the Afrikaner National Party by a slim but history-making majority. This marked the birth of apartheid in South Africa, and from the standpoint of imperial policymakers, it brought the whole question of a united central Africa back into focus and rekindled the idea of a liberal British counterweight to Afrikaner nationalism.

The 1948 strike by black workers, mentioned in an earlier chapter, also tended to reignite the question of white political security in the collective mind of the white electorate, generating fundamental anxiety that might easily be channelled towards amalgamation as a possible solution. It must be added, however, that no single factor was entirely conclusive, for there were as many whites in Southern Rhodesia who feared being overwhelmed by Northern Rhodesian blacks as there were those who were keen to court a late marriage to South Africa. The majority opinion, however, both in Salisbury and in Whitehall, was now more or less in favour of amalgamation, and by the end of 1948 the question seemed to be not if, but when and how.

Clifford Dupont

11
The Last Black Moderate

To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships – **W.E.B du Boise**

Sometime in mid-1950, Hardwicke Holderness, of the legal firm of Scanlen & Holderness, received an unexpected visit from black unionist and shopkeeper Charles Mzingeli. Mzingeli was seeking advice and representation in a bid to challenge the 'Subversive Activities Bill', due to be presented to Parliament at the end of that year. This minor incident passed virtually unnoticed, but it nonetheless played an important part in setting the tone of race relations to follow. It was an encounter between two mostly unimportant players, but it would perhaps be the last time that a black nationalist leader attempted to work within the system to bring about change. It was the point, indeed, at which the senior black leadership began to understand that cooperation was not only useless but counterproductive, serving only to undermine their own credibility in the eyes of their majority, militant constituencies.

The Subversive Activities Bill was in its essence the white response to the strikes of 1948, and although in principle it was non-discriminatory, it was obviously aimed at countering any repeat of the native unrest of two years earlier.[6] Mzingeli was the leader of the Mashonaland chapter of the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers Union that, alongside Benjamin Burombo's Bulawayo-based African Voice Association, formed the basis of black political resistance as it emerged in the late 1920s. Hardwicke Holderness described Mzingeli as a bespectacled, earnest, sensitive, touchy and probably quite a lonely man. Holderness, however, was prone to overcompensate for the insensitivity of his people by trying to endear himself to blacks more sincerely than was often appropriate.

Charles Mzingeli, indeed, was very much of the old school of African nationalists. He was a trade unionist with limited education, but an extensive experience of life under different racist regimes. He worked, for example, as a 'houseboy', or domestic servant in both South Africa and Northern Rhodesia, and of course, he lived and worked for most of his life in Southern Rhodesia. While in South Africa, however, he came under the influence of the famous union leader, Clement Kadalie, a storied Nyasa

trade unionist who in 1920 founded the mighty South African Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. Returning home to Southern Rhodesia, Mzingeli was inspired to do the same, and teaming up with prominent nationalist and trades unionist Masotsha Ndlovu, he co-founded a local chapter of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union.

Mzingeli might, therefore, be best described as a mid-ranking nationalist of the time. He did not have that all-important degree, which was something profoundly revered by all, so he could never be counted among the top ideologues. Nonetheless, he was a venerable figure, and in his memoirs, Holderness records that when Mzingeli was due to call on him, he was careful to instruct his white secretary not to announce his arrival as a 'boy' waiting to see him. He was also concerned about how his other clients would react to finding themselves seated alongside a black man in his waiting room.

The Subversive Activities Bill, meanwhile, was a carefully drafted document designed to read vaguely enough to pass the imperial veto but to be sufficiently wide-ranging to cover any eventuality. Mzingeli handed Holderness a memorandum on behalf of his union, listing its concerns and pointing out the discriminatory implications in some clauses. The memorandum then drifted into a more general overview of political conditions for blacks, ending with a plea for parliamentarians to give serious consideration to the fundamental principles of democracy.

> We desire to point out that the colour bar in industry as it exist now under the Industrial Conciliation Act, is one of the strong factor that the intention of the bill in question is intended to keep less privileged section of the community as perpetual drawers of water and hewers of wood. This is complete contrary to the principal of Human Rights and the rights which all those who participated in the battle against nazi and fascism to make the world safe for democracy. We desire to add that the native policy of this country which demand immediate overhauling if cooperation between African people and the government is to be maintained, has since 1941 deteriorated to a point far below reasonable measure, and the government is fully aware that African people are strongly opposed to such policy. Yet it now introduce a bill in order to make any protest illegal soon as such bill comes into power [sic].

In the end, there was little that Holderness could do but redraft the document to reflect what he felt that he knew about both blacks and parliamentarians. In later years he was to regret some of the phraseology he used – such as ‘the African’ and ‘the more advanced African’. He did make a significant point, though, when he wrote of Mzingeli in the revised memorandum. “It is not always easy for such an African to retain the confidence of his people when he advocates cooperation as the best method of achieving social justice.” He then went on to muse on the folly of taking for granted the last generation of black moderates trying to reach out for common ground. “If whites prove unable to take seriously and sympathetically someone like Mzingeli, they would be asking for leaders like him to be replaced by much more implacable ones who might really have something sinister about them.”

In the end, the representation made absolutely no difference. For reasons that transcended the honest brokerage of two good men, the bill passed through Parliament with a minimum of debate. Holderness, of course, knew this in advance, or at least suspected it, as Charles Mzingeli probably did too. In the meanwhile, Holderness’ predictions were proved to be entirely correct, for very soon Mzingeli would find himself emasculated by the emergence of younger and more radical cadre. In 1953 these newcomers founded the much more assertive ‘City Youth League’, and for the first time began confronting the basic laws of the country. In fact, the very relevance of Southern Rhodesia’s existence under minority rule was fearlessly challenged, and whites were dared to fight or leave.

Charles Mzingeli

12
The Federation

The zebra has black and white stripes but is one living organism and has one heart – **Capricorn Africa Society Manifesto**

In 1953, forty-four-year-old Roland 'Roy' Welensky returned to Salisbury, the city of his birth, from an extended period of life and labour in Northern Rhodesia. The objective of his return was to take up his post in the cabinet of the newly established Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, headquartered in Salisbury. He knew the city well, hailing as he did from the south side of the railway tracks that divided the middle and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods of the capital from the suburbs of the coloured, lower and poor white classes. He had indeed come a long way since then, and as Booker T Washington once observed, the measure of achievement is mainly in the obstacles overcome.

In the years before World War I, resources in Rhodesia were scarce, and poverty among white immigrants widespread, but even by those modest standards, Roy Welensky had a difficult childhood. He was born the youngest of thirteen children to an itinerant Jewish hotelier and an Afrikaner mother. It was fortunate that he was vigorously constituted, for in the Rhodesia of those days, and particularly in the career that he chose, only the most robust were able to survive.

When just eleven years old, Roy Welensky's mother died after years of suffering from a lingering and debilitating illness. It was during this unhappy period in his life that he met the man who would later become his political mentor, partner and friend. Godfrey Huggins attended the dying woman in her last days, and in doing so, he was particularly drawn to the rough, straight-talking but bright, agreeable and engaging Roy. According to Welensky himself, he was a child whose days were spent in the veld around the city, and swimming 'bare-arsed in the Makabusi with the *piccanins*'. Huggins must have sensed a higher strain of intelligence in the boy who, during long conversations about this and that, had much to say about the British Empire, and how fortunate a man might consider himself to be part of that mighty Anglo-Saxon union.

Welensky, however, had hardly been born to such ideals, for he did not have a drop of British blood in him, but he adopted them entirely as his

life progressed. He would never forget those conversations with Huggins, and in later years was apt to describe himself as half Jewish, half Afrikaner and one hundred per cent British, which, incidentally, has more than a slight flavour of Huggins' humour and language. In 1953, indeed, that fierce loyalty was rewarded with a knighthood in recognition of his contribution to the British Empire. Like most Rhodesians, however, although hostile to successive British governments, he was never disparaging of the British Empire, and never disloyal to the Crown.

Roy Welensky left school at the age of fourteen and drifted for a few years in a handful of odd jobs. While still in his teens he entered the ring as a prize-fighter, and in 1926, at the age of nineteen, he was crowned heavyweight champion of the Rhodesias. Later he joined the railways, first as a fireman, then as a mainline conductor until in due course worked his way up to the position of an engine driver. Soon afterwards, he left Southern Rhodesia and settled in the town of Broken Hill in Northern Rhodesia, which was, and still is a hub of the regional railway system. His political apprenticeship was served with the Broken Hill branch of the white Railway Workers Union, where he again worked his way up through the ranks until in 1933 he was elected to the chair.

His was a simple and uncluttered worldview, and his intelligence, ponderous and untutored as it was, was nonetheless bountiful. His friend John Connell confirmed this in an introduction to his memoirs where he observed that Welensky's brain had matured late but rapidly, and considering his grasp of imperial politics, and a political career that earned him a knighthood, Roy Welensky's brain was clearly a sharper instrument than his fist. As Connell put it, he was as morally courageous as he was physically stalwart.

While still on the footplate, and only thirty-one years old, Welensky was elected to the Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council, where he became known as a thoughtful, constructive and vigorous, if often controversial speaker. In 1941 he formed the Northern Rhodesia Labour Party, and soon afterwards was appointed Director of Manpower for the colony. This appointment interfered with an undoubtedly genuine desire to fight in World War II, but it also gave an unlikely statesman his opportunity to mature and develop. Throughout his life, he remained a clear-minded and forthright man, and it might perhaps not be overstating the matter to say that he and Huggins were the last of the principled men on the white

political stage in Southern Africa. Like Jan Smuts and Cecil Rhodes, the candour and honesty of both lent them a community of purpose that endured as long as each lived. Some have said that they were the last, genuine colonial survivors, men who confronted the inevitable to save the fading remnants of British Africa.

Their battle began in London, soon after Huggins' 1948 election victory. Towards the end of that year, both men happened to be visiting Britain, representing their respective territories at a conference of African dependencies. By that time, Welensky was the acknowledged leader of the 'unofficials' of the Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council and, like Huggins, he was a champion of amalgamation. The conference was an all-Africa affair that also attracted members of the emerging black elite, whom the British Government tended to regard as representative of the future of British Africa. Confronted by this fact, both men were eager to make their own particular representations for the future. Theirs, however, was a version of the future that neither Whitehall nor the black political elite felt particularly comfortable discussing. Both men were advocates of amalgamation as a precursor to the ultimate independence of their two territories from the Crown, under terms of minority rule.

Roy Welensky and Godfrey Huggins represented the first genuine convergence of opinion between Northern and Southern Rhodesia on the question of amalgamation. Since the possibility was first discussed, numerous opportunities had come and gone, and to its supporters, it seemed at times that the whole concept was ill-fated. For example, on the very day that Huggins arrived in London to revive the question after his 1939 election victory, Hitler invaded Poland, and nine years would pass before the All Africa Conference presented an opportunity to fan a little heat into the dying embers of Cecil Rhodes' dream.

Welensky was the first to take up the bellows, visiting the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech-Jones, for many years Labour's expert on colonial matters. In his customary manner, Welensky put to the Secretary of State directly the question of amalgamation, with or without Nyasaland. In his response, Creech-Jones was equally forthright. No British government, he told Welensky, would ever allow Northern Rhodesia or Nyasaland to fall under a constitution as racially imbalanced as that of Southern Rhodesia. Consigning several million blacks to the administration of a few hundred thousand whites was just no longer an

option. The new global forums and current international realpolitik simply would not allow it.

Welensky then sought the advice of former Tory Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley, who ruefully confirmed the prognosis of his successor, but added for good measure that when he had been in office, he had given both Welensky and Huggins an instrument that could have been made to work. What was being referred to here was the 'Central African Council', a kind of inter-territorial coordinating committee that had first been mooted by the Bledisloe Commission as an alternative to amalgamation, and then adopted by Stanley soon after the war. It was under this arrangement that the currency board vault had been sited in Southern Rhodesia, causing the political ruction that put Jacob Smit out of parliament.

Oliver Stanley had nonetheless always been quite clear in his opinion that amalgamation of the two Rhodesias under existing conditions was just not practical, and the reason was that Southern Rhodesia's race policy was incompatible with modern concepts of democracy. Acknowledging, however, that a degree of increased cooperation between the two territories might perhaps be desirable, he sanctioned the formation of the Central African Council to facilitate a higher level collaboration between the regions in fields that were safely non-controversial.

Huggins accepted the Central African Council only on the understanding that it was a preliminary arrangement to full amalgamation, and in the meanwhile sat back to await the appointment of a new British Colonial Secretary. However, when Creech-Jones took occupation of that chair, he proved to be even less inclined to consider the proposal. Indeed, he reviewed the situation, and in 1947 reported back to the House of Commons that conditions for blacks in Southern Rhodesia had not improved sufficiently for there to be any change of policy from that of his predecessor, and there matters stood.

Welensky, of course, rejected the suggestion that a Central African Council compensated for actual amalgamation, to which Oliver Stanley replied with a shrug, reiterating that a full merger of the two territories was impossible. After a moment's reflection, however, he offered the parting remark that if the Central African Council was too soft an option, and full amalgamation too hard, then why not consider something in between? Why not, he suggested, study a looser type of federal arrangement, one that might balance the advantages and disadvantages of full amalgamation?

After tramping the streets of London for an hour or two, in deep thought, Welensky dropped in on Huggins at his hotel and broke the news. Although rueful at this confirmation, Huggins was not particularly surprised. The issue of amalgamation was now plainly dead, a sad fact but true, so there was nothing to be gained by gnawing at it. The emphasis now would be on salvage and, if Stanley had thrown out a lifeline, then the obvious course of action was swim for it. Subsequently, on 16 February 1949, a meeting of interested parties convened at Victoria Falls to explore the different options. Huggins was the only delegate representing any government in office, for although delegates from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were both present, none had authority to speak on behalf of their government.

The conference was chaired by Sir Miles Thomas, chairman of the Colonial Development Corporation, who was in the territory conducting an economic development survey and was attending as no more than an interested party. Huggins was accompanied by Edgar Whitehead, by then Southern Rhodesian Minister of finance, along with two other members of the Cabinet. Welensky led a small delegation of Northern Rhodesian unofficials while the Nyasaland delegation was led by wealthy plantation owner Malcolm Barrow. No black delegates were invited because Huggins reasoned that the conference was a meeting of leaders of established political parties, and besides, the common voters roll of Southern Rhodesia was ostensibly colour-blind, so no special arrangements were necessary.

In the plenary session, Welensky got straight to the point, moving that the conference advocate a federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and barring a few points of discussion, this is what happened. A constitutional framework around the Australian model was agreed, with the understanding that this would lead the proposed federation towards Australian-type independence. It was Malcolm Barrow, however, who reminded the assembled delegates that it would be unthinkable to pursue the project without the support of the Africans. The closing communiqué went to some length to reflect this sentiment, and to stress that the rights of blacks under the proposed federation would be enshrined and protected. It was clear that criticism by blacks was expected, which indeed it turned out to be the case, although resistance from sectors of the white community was also not insignificant.

An inescapable fact, however, was that the Imperial Government had not yet been formally consulted, so all of the rosy prognostications remained no more than that. Arthur Creech-Jones was a prickly customer, and certainly not one to ever forget the Sacred Trust. He was a member of the Friends of Africa and the Anti-Slavery Society and a past chairman of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and as a cabinet minister, he tilted towards a liberal intellectual position. This he confirmed in a later interview in which he alluded to the provisions of the Central African Council and hinted strongly at his reluctance to abandon its work in favour of a closer union. He also said he had noticed considerable apprehension over the matter among the African populations of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

"Permanent white settlement needs to be controlled." He said. "Because Northern Rhodesia is a protectorate, the Africans have been guaranteed certain inherent rights, and therefore in agricultural development, there are certain definite restrictions so far as Europeans are concerned. Nevertheless, it is clear for the economic well-being and social development of the Territory the European must have a permanent place, and it has been British policy while safeguarding the interests of the Africans, to encourage a degree of European development."

Roy Welensky was never able thereafter to refer in his memoirs to Creech-Jones without a strong hint of venom. He even went so far as to make it known that if the Secretary of State ever tried to enforce such opinions in his territory, he would need to do so at the head of an army. Despite this, Huggins and he both actively promulgated the doctrine of 'partnership', for certainly, some visible effort was vital as proof of positive race relations. Without it, the federation would be a lost cause. Race had after all been the perennial bugbear and was increasingly becoming the defining political conundrum of the age. The restrictions in this view of 'partnership', however, were quite clear, and rather despairingly he tried to make them understood. In a speech to the Northern Rhodesia Legislature, for example, he had this to say:

"I am prepared to work in partnership with the African people, and for as long as I can see, in that partnership, we will be the senior partner, but I will never accept that Northern Rhodesia will be an African state. Political rights, after all, mean very little to a man with an empty stomach. Let us give them economic development and political rights can come later."

These comments, however, and this vision were categorically rejected by his colleagues. Welensky was dismayed to look up midway through his speech and see the official members of the House stand up and walk out. It became startlingly clear to him at that moment that the gulf between Britain and her sons and daughters in Africa had grown very wide indeed.

Welensky could not understand, probably until his dying day, why such clear and honest brokerage was construed as having such evil intent. Surely in the interests of preserving the English-speaking civilisation that Rhodes had grafted onto the native landscape, the white man had to remain the senior partner. In the opinion of Roy Welensky, and many men like him, whites could and must be trusted to foster the advancement of the disenfranchised majority. The fact that the natives wanted total and immediate power was part of their immaturity, and it was incumbent on the Europeans to limit their zeal, and dole out responsibility in modest and digestible increments.

Welensky and his ilk were not rich men, nor did they employ corruption and demagoguery as part of their political vocabulary, already a fact somewhat unusual in the African context. At the heart of the federal question was fear and mistrust – fear that the black man just could not balance and maintain a modern system of democratic government for the benefit of all, and distrust of the British. The failing of these men was that they simply could not construe, or ever be persuaded, that such a thing as majority rule was possible.

Welensky's may have been a lonely voice in that chamber, but it was not without echoes elsewhere. Oliver Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary in the Churchill administration, was a firm proponent of amalgamation for the central African territories, and a believer in the principle of partnership. He repeated the orthodoxy that British skill and experience must for many years remain the foundation of any federal arrangement. Ultimately Africans would be brought into the running, and into control of the government, but the premature swamping of the white vote would only bring political and economic disaster in its wake.

Under a Labour government, however, British official opinion on the subject of the federation and the broader question of governance remained ambivalent, and for the remainder of 1949 policy drifted. Both Welensky and Huggins were at times tempted to abandon their efforts since

British indecision merely served to increase the tempo of black resistance. “I say this with deep regret,” Huggins lamented in a speech delivered sometime later to the Southern Rhodesian Assembly, “but it is perfectly plain to me that we in this country are not considered fit and proper persons to whom the future destinies of the natives of Central Africa should be entrusted.”

By then black resistance in the two protectorates had indeed attracted some potent advocates. A Nyasa doctor by the name of Hastings Banda, who was then practising medicine in North London, was increasingly drawn into the power politics of resistance. The leader of the Northern Rhodesian Congress, Harry Nkumbula, was likewise articulating an increasingly powerful groundswell of black opinion. Another up and coming voice in the movement was a certain Kenneth Kaunda, who was supportive of Nkumbula, but also a forceful personality in his own right, and certainly a man to be watched in the broader arena of black nationalism.

Federation in itself gave definite focus and direction to black protest, which in each territory, notwithstanding varying freedoms of expression, was underpinned by the universal principle that what the white man stood for must by definition be bad for the black man. Many blacks were by then beginning to believe that a total handover of power was not only inevitable, but imminent, and prevented only by local white obstinacy. Colonial rule in Africa appeared to be balancing on a knife-edge, and there was a strong sense that a little pressure applied in the right places could bring the whole ageing edifice crashing down. This impression was not diminished by the almost senile benevolence with which the British Government smothered the restive nationalists. Kenneth Kaunda described the mood very well in a collection of his memoirs.

“The Mahatma Gandhi and I were equally fortunate in facing a colonial power which fell far short of being a ruthless tyranny. [Had] our struggle been in the Republic of South Africa or Salazar’s Portuguese African colonies, it might have been a different story.”

Kaunda might well have added Southern Rhodesia to his list of imperial bogeys, for in that territory, black opinion of any sort was met with open hostility. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the advance of Southern Rhodesian race policy into the wider region was something generally to be feared. Beyond that fact, however, regional nationalists

tended not to be particularly concerned about Southern Rhodesia, because, as was true in South Africa, the whites there were in for it the long haul. It was in the two northern protectorates where the colonial weakness was most tangible, and it was there that efforts at destabilisation were to be most focused.

In the meanwhile, the question of the federation was revived early in 1950 with a shift of party political fortunes in Westminster. In February of that year Britain went to the polls, and although Labour survived, it did so only narrowly. To Roy Welensky's immense satisfaction, however, Arthur Creech-Jones was one of several high profile casualties, and his replacement was veteran miner's representative and union leader James Griffiths. Griffiths was a socialist by temperament and positioned no nearer to the right than Creech-Jones, but he was a fresh face, and that at least promised new hope.

As a trade unionist, however, Griffiths ought at least to have had more in common with Welensky than Creech-Jones, but Welensky again found him to be ego driven and determined to compensate for his lack of experience of Africa by feteing all the Africans he met. Helping to balance this out, however, was an intellectual moderate by the name of Patrick Gordon Walker who was serving as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, and he was indeed welcome as far as Welensky was concerned.

Huggins, on the other hand, won Griffiths over immediately with his customary charm and cordiality, and after proposing a second conference on the federal issue, he the Secretary of State parted on good terms, with the latter promising to consider it. In November, Griffiths did indeed announce that a conference of officials from the three territories would be held in London early the following year. This was encouraging news, although Welensky and Huggins by then were conditioned to be cautious. With such a small parliamentary majority, it seemed inevitable that the Labour government would shortly have to return to the polls, and would be reluctant as a consequence to embark on any bold policy initiatives. As if to underline this fact, the announcement by the Colonial Secretary prompted a renewed round of histrionics on the part of the black nationalists, and these, unfortunately, were all too clearly audible in Whitehall.

The promised conference, however, went ahead and was held in the Commonwealth Relations Office on 5 March 1951, and to the surprise of many, it endorsed the principle of federation. This might seem less

surprising if one considers that it was mainly the radical black intelligentsia who opposed federation, and this was balanced out somewhat by radical opinion among a minority of whites who favoured either going it alone or reconsidering union with South Africa. Griffiths could claim to be charting a course between the radical elements of both races, and in doing so maintaining a thoroughly British ambiguity.

Predictions of an early general election, however, were soon proved correct, and the British Government chose as the moment to make the announcement the eve of the second Victoria Falls conference. Both James Griffiths and Patrick Walker, who had both just flown into Victoria Falls, were wrong-footed, and the conference promptly deflated. Its two principal delegates, backed into a corner, resorted to ponderous but empty and somewhat distracted pontifications. As soon as a seemly conclusion could be brought to the proceedings, they packed up their bags and hurried back to London.

The news was not all bad, however. The general election brought in a narrow majority for the Conservatives, and a Tory victory always tended to be good news for white Rhodesia. Winston Churchill was wheeled out to serve his final term, and whatever else he was capable of at the age of seventy-seven, he could at least be relied on to be sympathetic to white Rhodesia. As his Secretary of State for the Colonies, he appointed Oliver Lyttelton, who it might be remembered was something of a champion of white governance. Better still, his undersecretary was a young Jew by the name of Andrew Cohen, who was perhaps best known as a leading light of the early anti-apartheid movement. He was quite obviously not supportive of Southern Rhodesian race policy, but he was forced to concede that it was better than South African. In the years following World War II, Afrikaner Nationalism was gathering real momentum, and what effect this would have on the territories to the north was of concern to the British Government. Cohen was one of a handful who recognised that if Southern Rhodesia was unable to find a suitable political accommodation in the north, she would be just as apt to look to the south, and he was right.

There were indeed many in Southern Rhodesia who thought well of the South African apartheid solution, and economically, Southern Rhodesia's rapidly developing economy was better suited to union with South Africa than with the under-developed north. Moreover, the two countries had been on the warmest terms since 1923. Huggins himself was

friendly with South African Prime Minister Daniel Malan, and this alone suggested that Southern Rhodesia might throw in its lot with Pretoria if federation failed. Under no circumstances could a career liberal like Andrew Cohen allow this to happen.

Lyttelton, on the other hand, was a businessman and tended to view politics with a more practical bias. He saw central Africa as three separate territories with complementary economies but each with their eggs in one basket. Melded into a unitary bloc, the single economy would have sufficient diversity to attract investment, and would subsequently grow rapidly. He acknowledged African opposition but was not particularly moved by it.

Huggins once again wasted no time in approaching the powers that be, and despite increasing black resistance, he was encouraged by the warmth of his reception in London. His visit resulted in the announcement that yet another conference was to be held in the imperial capital that spring. This time the delegates would consider a final draft proposal that would then be submitted to the various governments for approval or rejection. It was further agreed that African representatives would be invited, and to this end, Huggins summoned two prominent Southern Rhodesian nationalists, Jasper Savanhu, journalist, trade unionist and ex-secretary of Congress, and Joshua Nkomo. In his memoirs, Welensky described Nkomo as a ‘social worker’, although Nkomo was then also the president of the Southern Rhodesian Congress.

Nkomo was indeed a rising star in the nationalist movement in Southern Rhodesia. Although a ponderous and self-opinionated man, he was emerging as the chief spokesman for the Southern Rhodesian black lobby. Born in 1917 in the Semokwe Native Reserve of Matabeleland, he was one of eight children of parents employed by the London Missionary Society. After completing his primary education in Tjolotjo Government Industrial School, he took his first job as a ‘delivery boy’ for the Osborne Bakery in Bulawayo. By 1941 he had saved enough money to pay for one year of secondary education at Adams College in Natal where, as a twenty-four-year-old, he was forced to endure considerable embarrassment attending lessons with children. He remained at Adams College thanks to a white clerk who took him under her wing and paid for the remainder of his tuition. From Adams, Nkomo moved to Jan Hofmyer School in Johannesburg, where the same benefactor paid for a three-year course of

study in social work. In Johannesburg, Nkomo was exposed to nationalist politics, and he returned to Southern Rhodesia in 1947 as a nationalist himself. He was the first black man to be given the post of social worker for Rhodesia Railways, and over the two years that followed he studied for an external degree with the University of South Africa. His political journey began, as Welensky's had, as a union organiser. Nkomo entered nationalist politics in 1952 when he succeeded Enoch Dumbutshena as President of the African National Congress, and in that capacity, he continued the work of his predecessors in trying to unite all the diverse native organisations of Southern Rhodesia. As with Samkange and Dumbutshena, however, this effort was ultimately to fail.

Also invited to the London Conference were two black members of the Northern Rhodesia Legislature, P. Sokota and D.L. Yambo, but at the last minute, they boycotted, presenting instead a prepared statement that outlined their opposition. Both Lord Salisbury, who succeeded Lord Lionel Ismay as Commonwealth Secretary, and Oliver Lyttelton, who maintained the services of Arthur Creech-Jones as his advisor, chaired the conference.

The 1952 London conference was widely seen as the final furlong in the journey to the federation, and submissions for and against grew loud and shrill. In the run-up to the meeting, Lyttelton visited the region to assess for himself white and black opinion and, in a speech delivered to the National Affairs Association, he confirmed that the British Government remained solidly behind federation. Ex-Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, also visited the region and in Northern Rhodesia met with both Harry Nkumbula and Kenneth Kaunda. He was forthright in telling both men that democracy as a principal was one only gradually absorbed, adding that the natives of central Africa had a long way to go before they could be considered competent to govern. Nkumbula protested that blacks had benefited from the excellent example of Britain but such flattery left Attlee unmoved.

The Conference wound up at the end of January, and published its report as a White Paper, defining the constitutional terms of the proposed federation. Among the closing speeches, that of Joshua Nkomo was noticeable for its moderation. He warned, however, that either his colleagues or his constituents, or perhaps both, might reject his personal endorsement of the process, which proved very quickly to be an understatement. Black opposition to the proposals was universal, and

clearly, Nkomo misjudged this fact. He was severely chastised by the movement, causing the first significant dent in his reputation, and no sooner had he returned home to Southern Rhodesia than he dramatically changed his mind, and grew shrill in condemnation of any talk of the federation. It would not be the last time that Nkomo would commit such a blunder, but that is the tale of another chapter.

The White Paper, in the meanwhile, detailed a complicated division of legislative powers that are too many and far too tedious to list here. Most importantly, though, the Imperial Government reserved power of veto over all legislation that differentiated between the races, but besides that, each territory would maintain its own native affairs administration and apply its own separate race policy. It was here, however, that Southern Rhodesian Chief Justice Robert Tredgold quickly identified the signature weakness of the federal structure. He made the point that each member territory could not reasonably deal separately with race matters, an issue of such overriding importance to the federation as a whole. The American Civil War, he noted, was fought as much as anything to equalise race policy across the breadth of the Union, without which it had no particular hope of survival.

Also, to add to an unsteady compromise, each territory was to maintain its standing constitutional status, which meant that Southern Rhodesia would remain a self-governing colony while Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would continue as British protectorates, ruled from Whitehall through a governor general. An African Affairs Board would be included within the framework of the federal parliament to protect the rights and interests of blacks across the three territories. Raymond Stockil, as a Southern Rhodesian delegate, fought vigorously for a secession clause that would allow one or other region to leave the federation if they chose. This was roundly rejected because it would have undermined cohesion to the detriment of future loans and investment. It was argued that such a clause did not exist in any federal constitution active at that time, except, ironically, for the Soviet Union. As a compromise, a clause was included that allowed for a re-examination of the constitution at a point no less than seven and no more than nine years from the date that it became law.

The optimists took this to mean that the way was clear for dominion status or even full independence within the Commonwealth after a preliminary trial period. No one at that time was prepared to contemplate that this clause might equally be turned into a vehicle for the Federation’s

dissolution. Huggins won a symbolic victory when he secured the inclusion of a paragraph in the preamble stating that when the inhabitants of the territories so desired the Federation could go forward with confidence towards the attainment of full membership of the Commonwealth. While this gave a strong impetus to the push for independence, the provision made it clear that this could only happen if the inhabitants so desired it. To the British Government, this implied all the inhabitants of the combined territories, while to the Federal Government it meant only those registered to vote. This became the blind spot that would bedevil any attempt in the coming years to solve the increasingly volatile race issue.

In March 1953, in the meanwhile, the conference's recommendations were debated in the House of Commons and passed with a narrow majority. On 10 April, a referendum was held in Southern Rhodesia that saw almost sixty-three per cent of the vote in favour. All three territorial legislatures were in agreement, and in the United Kingdom, the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation Act was granted Royal Assent on 14 July. The Order in Council was promulgated on 1 August, and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came formally into being on 4 September 1953. On that day, the Governor-General, Lord Llewellin, steamed into Salisbury railway station to a nineteen-gun salute. The Federal motto was set on a coat of arms supported on either side by a sable antelope and a leopard, and read: *Magni esse Mereamur, or* Let us Deserve to be Great! Stanlake Samkange, then a chirpy correspondent with the South African black circulation *Drum* magazine, offered another interpretation: "With partnership on our lips," he wrote, "and apartheid in our hearts, may we appear to be great." Welensky's concluding comments were a little more reverent. "We were, after all", he said, "the successors and inheritors of Cecil John Rhodes."

In the early years, the Federation did indeed appear to be great. Huggins formed an interim government in which his loyal associate Roy Welensky served as Minister of Transport, Communications and Posts, while in the meantime, the two founded the United Federal Party. In December 1953, three months after its founding, the first Federal general election was fought, and out of twenty-six seats, the UFP won twenty-four, just the kind of majority that Huggins was accustomed to. Six specially elected black members, two from each territory, took their seats in the first Federal Parliament, alongside three European members, one from each

region, exclusively responsible for African interests. They had as their weapon the imperial veto, and this they were empowered and encouraged to wield at will. Huggins formed his government with a clear mandate and set to work in earnest on this, the final phase of his long political career.

From the very outset, however, a divided franchise revealed the anomalous structure of the Federation. Southern Rhodesia employed a common role that made no racial distinctions, meaning that the federal vote in that territory was, in theory, open to blacks. In the two northern protectorates, on the other hand, only British citizens could vote, which disqualified almost all blacks, being as they were British-protected persons. While in practical terms this did not make much difference, it was nonetheless the point around which the early signs of stress in the Federation began to appear.

Despite this, Godfrey Huggins was given relatively fair weather to sail out his days. His personal prestige was sustained by an authentic majority which allowed him to keep a firm grip on power in the manner of the ageing autocrat he was. The only opposition to his administration came from the specially elected members of both races. The black members Huggins regarded as political minors, undergoing an apprenticeship, and he was inclined to ignore them. They, on the other hand, saw themselves as a constituted opposition with an obligation to oppose and harass the government, and they took that duty very seriously.

Despite this, Huggins' ballast was firm, and in the end, his problems had more to do with finding suitable men to serve in his government than listening to those who had no chance of doing so. Four separate administrations were now in existence, and the pressure on local white administrative resources was acute. The tendency was also for the best men to gravitate to the federal government, situated in the charming capital of Salisbury, which, of course, caused each of the territorial governments to languish. Huggins, in the meanwhile, settled into the sort of orthodoxy that tended to root him in an earlier age. He scorned modern methods and kept the common touch that had served him so well in the past. Dealing with old soldiers like Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee tended to obscure how out of step he had become, and one or two of those around him began to sense that he was holding up progress.

If Huggins was seen as an anachronism, however, then there were aspects of his government that were no less anachronistic, but about which

he could do nothing, even had he wished to. Perhaps the best example was Native Affairs, still kept as a separate branch of government, and although theoretically answerable to the Crown, in reality, accountable to no-one. At a time when racial partnership was not only a catchword but also the very essence of the white man's survival, the government had no opportunity to make fresh contacts with blacks, and nothing new to offer them. Racial overlap occurred only in the home, where the opinion of domestic servants, if ever sought, could not be relied on, and in the detention and processing of criminals and political troublemakers. The government had no access to the native reserves, and the Native Affairs officials made a point of keeping it that way. Little empires formed with local white Native Affairs officials and their wives assuming an almost viceregal aspect. For blacks looking at whites and forming opinions, this was not a perfect example.

Another unsatisfactory state of affairs was the exclusivity of the civil service. This again was something that the Federal Government itself could do nothing to change. In the first place, the civil service was not centralised, necessitating four separate bureaucracies. Except for Southern Rhodesia, whose civil service was exclusive for different reasons, each was staffed by Colonial Service expatriates. The civil service should have been centralised, as Huggins put it so that federal staff went home every night instead of every three years. The civil service might also have been the obvious place to begin the process of black advancement, for indeed, it was seen as the holy grail by young blacks with secondary school education. Later policies, aimed at fast-tracking a black middle class would have been much more successful if a steadily advancing corps of black civil servants were present to make up the vanguard.

Huggins suggested to Whitehall that the external recruitment of civil servants cease and that a combined bureaucracy be created to manage all federal and regional affairs. The idea was received by the British Government with very little enthusiasm, however, and progressively whittled down to an inter-territorial 'Public Service Commission' that had virtually no ameliorating effects on the problem at all. The exclusivity of the civil service remained one of a number of obvious partnership defects in the Federation that enraged blacks and fermented opposition, but which could not fundamentally be changed.

If anything blighted Huggins' long valediction, it was the question of the positioning of a hydroelectric scheme on the Zambezi River. The

economic successes of the Federation precipitated massive industrial growth that in turn put tremendous stress on the existing power grid. Until then all three territories had relied on thermal power generation, which in itself depended on coal production at Wankie, and the ability of the railway system to transport it. The Federation was fortunate, however, in having the substantial Zambezi and Kafue river systems, both of which were potentially exploitable as sources of hydro-electricity.

Politics imposed itself on the issue when technical practicalities began to interfere with the delicate balance of territorial partisanship. The dam controversy, in fact, was the only substantive political crisis since 1923 that had no race overtones, and refreshingly, it pitted one section of white interest against another. Discussions had been underway at different levels since 1941 over the question of which of the two options – the Zambezi or the Kafue – would be the most suitable. In 1953, while Huggins was still Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, he put his weight behind the Kafue scheme, even though most of the benefits would then accrue to Northern Rhodesia. The only question at that time was financing, the main burden of which would have fallen on the Government of the United Kingdom. However, with the unification of the three territories, the financial burden shifted somewhat to the Federal Government itself.

Huggins, however, held firm to his support for the Kafue option and introduced a bill to that effect into the Federal Parliament. Most members, however, were indifferent to the details, with the notable exception of Garfield Todd, who was, incidentally, Huggins' successor as the territorial Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. Todd challenged the proposal for the obvious benefits that the Zambezi option would bring to Southern Rhodesia. He initiated a geological survey that, at the last minute, located a viable site for a dam wall at the Kariba Gorge. He then presented a sufficiently compelling case to the Federal Parliament that caused Huggins to pause and reconsider.

Hoping to avoid controversy, Huggins appointed a group of neutral French consultants who produced a second report that presented the government with an immediate dilemma. It was estimated that a dam on the Kafue would cost £55 million to construct, and although water volumes in that river had not been studied in any detail, it was further estimated that 2,600,000 kilowatt-hours would be produced. Kariba, on the other hand, would cost an estimated £85 million but could be expected to generate

6,500,000 kilowatt-hours, more than double the Kafue output. The consultants supported the Kariba option, therefore, with the Kafue project recommended only as a useful appendage.

Huggins changed his mind, and while his apologists swear that his opinion was swayed solely by technical considerations, his detractors equally accuse him of predicting the breakup of the Federation and arranging for Southern Rhodesia to end up with the choicest assets. Overnight, Northern Rhodesia was plunged into a state of virtual mutiny. Public meetings were held across the territory and threats to secede were as wildly made as they were greeted. The Northern Rhodesia legislature passed a motion that fell short of condemnation of the scheme but expressed misgivings at what it regarded as partisanship in the Federal Government. The uproar was then amplified considerably when it was further decided that the power station would be sited on the south and not the north bank of the river. In the event of dissolution, control of the project would then automatically revert to the south. Again, his apologists insist that Huggins was swayed solely by technical considerations, and there is strong support for this view. The primary transport route up from the south was the only one feasible for the movement of the massive plant and equipment required, and certainly, none of it could reasonably cross the Zambezi to the north on any existing bridges.

As things turned out, however, the enormous inland sea, at the time the largest man-made lake in the world, did indeed benefit Southern Rhodesia much more than her northern neighbour. Indeed, during the hot war that raged along the length of the Zambezi after the breakup, Southern Rhodesia would never have survived without control of the power utilities. Huggins, in the meanwhile, held his ground, and for better or worse, the dam was built on the Zambezi with the turbines sited on the south bank.

In 1956, Godfrey Huggins was raised to the peerage in recognition of his long political career, and the undoubted contribution he made to the development of central Africa. ‘Huggie’ became the 1st Viscount Malvern of Rhodesia, and of Bexley in the County of Kent. This unusual combination of geographic designations indicated his loyalty to his school, highly becoming of a statesman of his period, the home that he had left long before and his adopted country. Such an honour was appropriate for a man of seventy-three years old, enjoying the twilight of a distinguished political career. In October of that year, Lord Malvern resigned from the leadership

of both the Federal Government and the United Federal Party, clearing the way for Roy Welensky to step into the traces and begin, in many ways, the real work of the Federation. Godfrey Huggins maintained his place as a respected backbencher and reigned on occasion as the much loved adopted son of the House of Lords. He retired to his farm in Arcturus and died in 1971 at the age of eighty-eight.

13
The Liberal Experiment

We are in danger of becoming a race of fear-ridden neurotics –
Garfield Todd in a speech to the Interracial Association on 15 June 1957

Huggins' elevation to the federal executive opened the way for a realignment of the political landscape in Southern Rhodesia. Within this sudden leadership vacuum, created by the formation of the Federal Government, Southern Rhodesia briefly embarked on a new, and unexpected ideological direction. The pivotal 1948 general election in Southern Rhodesia, which set the whole thing in motion, also introduced a handful of new faces into the Legislature, all of whom were, in one way or another, to influence the critical years that lay ahead.

One of these newcomers, Humphrey Gibbs, tentatively entered the political arena as the United Party member for Wankie. Gibbs was a slight, wan, earnest, soft-spoken and civic-minded Englishman, who had been farming in the Matabeleland countryside since the 1920s. His election to the Southern Rhodesian Parliament served as his introduction to the general establishment. An equally earnest but somewhat less English farmer by the name of Ian Douglas Smith also took his seat on the backbenches, but in his case as the Liberal Party member for Selukwe. Smith, who was nominally a Scotsman, but also resolutely a Rhodesian, would in due course serve as the only one of eight Southern Rhodesian prime ministers to claim local birth. The careers of both of these men will be discussed in much more detail in later chapters, but for the moment, it was the introduction into the still relatively serene political establishment of a forty-year-old missionary from New Zealand that concerns us most.

Todd was a well-known liberal and a most unlikely newcomer to what was still an extremely conservative political stage. That he later became Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia was almost unimaginable, and can only really be attributed to happenstance, and the lack of established political talent to cover all of the four separate cabinets. It might perhaps also have been true that for just a brief moment there was a willingness on the part of white Rhodesian to suspend its disbelief and give peace a chance.

It is worth pointing out before we embark on Garfield Todd's contribution to our story that in the mid-1950s, white credibility and black indulgence had not yet been used up and abandoned. The black establishment remained receptive to compromise while the white establishment seemed poised on the cusp of embracing genuine partnership. All that was required, it seemed, was for the right brand of courageous leadership to drive both races across that vital precipice. To achieve this would take a prime minister capable not only of tearing through the perception of white supremacy but one who could force his brethren to accept once and for all the peril of their situation. Many liberals on both sides of the race divide hoped that Garfield Todd was this man.

It was through his hunt for good men during the lean years of the war that Huggins first persuaded Todd to run for the Shabani seat. Todd had then been settled in Southern Rhodesia for just fourteen-years, serving as head of the New Zealand sponsored Dadaya Mission in the southeast of the country. As a missionary, Todd inhabited a world separate from his fellow legislators and far removed from the experience of most whites. He lived and worked with blacks on a simple, interactive and human level, and as an educator, he was personally acquainted with many of the emerging young nationalists. In fact, for quite a few young men who would go on to prominence, Todd was the first white man personally known to them. Ndabaningi Sithole recalled his first encounter with Todd in his book, *African Nationalism,* the foreword to which was written in 1959 by Todd himself. Sithole found the missionary gruff, doctrinaire and partial to corporal punishment, but above all infinitely kind and fair.

As a New Zealander, Todd's colonial credentials were impeccable, and the unavoidable stigma that hung over his vocation was diluted somewhat when he purchased a 90,000-acre cattle ranch in the vicinity of his mission. This acquisition won him membership in a significantly more muscular club than the church, although how much this aided the momentum of his political career it is hard to say. The fact that Godfrey Huggins was always very friendly towards him was also perhaps significant, although it was noted that Huggins was brazenly candid when discussing cabinet affairs with Todd, which to most observers was a sure sign that he had no intention of including him in it.

Garfield Todd might have been satisfied to remain on the backbenches, and Huggins might have been content to keep him there had

not the exodus of white political talent to the Federal Government opened many fresh opportunities. Huggins, of course, vacated his seat as Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, paving the way for a corps of loyalists to follow him across the road to the Federal Chambers. This left the territorial cabinet and legislature of Southern Rhodesia scraping the barrel for viable candidates. This, of course, ought not to imply that Todd was a scraping, far from it, but there can also be no doubt that without the manpower shortage the world would not have heard the name of Garfield Todd.

In the event, a ballot was held at the United Party Congress in Bulawayo in August 1953, where Todd's name was included among only a handful of candidates. Standing against him was ex-cabinet minister Julian Greenfield, who made no secret of his preference for a place in the Federal Cabinet alongside Huggins. Greenfield stood only to test Todd's popularity, and by no means did he want to win. The first round of voting hung on a split decision, with the deciding vote being cast by the party chairman. Greenfield's desire to lose precipitated the second ballot, and while the two candidates enjoyed a friendly lunch at the Bulawayo Club, Todd won the majority. To his great surprise, and to the consternation of many, he found himself the leader of the party and *de facto* prime minister.

Todd, therefore, was hardly swept into office on a tide of popular support. Whites, on the whole, regarded his victory with circumspection, although, at a point of national indecision, there were obviously enough people willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. The black response to Todd's improbable ascent, on the other hand, seemed somewhat out of proportion to its significance. In fact, for a group anxious for some real evidence of change, and authentic race partnership, he appeared to be the answer to a prayer. He was not widely known in either the black or white community, but his missionary origins and the uncertain temper of the times caused him to be heralded in certain quarters with the joy of desperation. This in turn probably imbued Garfield Todd with an exaggerated sense of his own destiny, although it would not be long before the reality of race politics in Southern Rhodesia silenced the celestial trumpets.

The vehicle of Todd's political journey was, of course, white Rhodesian public opinion, although after 1956, and Roy Welensky's ascension to the office of Federal Prime Minister, the driver of that vehicle was less often Todd than Welensky. Todd and Welensky had humble origins in common, and the latter was only a year Todd's senior, but that was as far

as their commonality extended. Todd experienced a gentler youth in the family brick-pottery works in New Zealand and was an attractive and charismatic man. Welensky enjoyed no such advantages. Todd, of course, represented the left wing of the centre movement and Welensky the right.

By the time Sir Roy Welensky – he received his KCMG in 1953 – assumed the leadership of the Federal Party, Garfield Todd had been Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia for two years. The two men then took up opposing ends of a tug-of-war, as Todd himself put it, to grab the African people by the scruff of the neck and drag them into the twentieth century. By this, Todd presumably meant both black and white Africans. His view of the twentieth century was probably more precise that Welensky's, whose opinions on matters tended to be rooted in the age of men like Rhodes and Huggins. Both believed in partnership, but Todd did not necessarily see this as a master-servant style of association. He tended to define the white man's mission in Africa as one of leading the black man over the rocky road to social maturity, and eventual and full inclusion in the political process.

Welensky, however, obese, ponderous, not in the least attractive and without the nimble intellect of Todd, was nonetheless a forceful man, and an altogether more ambitious and aggressive politician. From the moment that Todd was elected head of what was in effect a sister party to the United Federal Party, he became a threat to Welensky's ambitions. These were not only selfish ambitions but also an expression of Welensky's view of the ultimate place of the white man in Africa, and in the future of British Central Africa in particular. Initially, Welensky had seen Todd as a potential rival to succeed Huggins as Federal Prime Minister, but later, when that did not happen, he saw Todd possibly mounting some sort of an ideological challenge as a means to upset the applecart of white regional dominance. This could only undermine Welensky's plan to guide the Federation to independence under the aegis of long-term if not perpetual white rule. An undeclared war was therefore implicit from the moment that Welensky assumed office as Federal Prime Minister, although whichever of them ultimately won, both were manifestly doomed. Times were changing, the world was advancing and time was running out. This, of course, lends an air of tragedy to the political careers of both men, but more poignantly perhaps to that of Todd because he was the one who might have led Rhodesia to a future of social justice without bloodshed.

An examination of Southern Rhodesian politics during this period unsurprisingly reveals a continuum of that evergreen and inescapable preoccupation with race. The 1930s and 1940s had seen a smoothing of many of the most jagged edges of Southern Rhodesian race policy, but as often happens, artificial solutions tend to lead to artificial problems. When the Land Apportionment Act was adopted as the bible of race development in Southern Rhodesia, signs of stress immediately began to appear in the holding capacity of the native reserves. One reasonably obvious solution was to make available some of the vast and unused reserves of white-owned land, which had been proposed more than once but never taken seriously. The logic was that this would merely delay the problem, and not solve it.

The crisis of overcrowding in the reserves had both a complex and a simple origin. The simple version was that the white man invaded the black man's country and took the best land. The more complicated version, however, was bound up in traditions of property and land usage among the blacks themselves. Black farmers had a notorious reputation for wasteful and destructive agricultural practice that made whites in general loath to cast pearls before swine. To the blacks, however, the land represented far more than a practical means of livelihood, and its use or misuse was irrelevant. The land was the foundation of a people's social identity, it was the burial place of the ancestors and the currency of power. If it was misused, and without a doubt it was, this was simply because native agricultural traditions were established at a time when land was unlimited and had never really developed much beyond that.

In 1902, the black population of Southern Rhodesia was no more 500,000 cultivating an area of perhaps 500,000 acres and grazing an estimated herd of about 55,000 head of cattle. Obviously, at that time, there was no particular pressure on land, but that would soon change. By 1941, not only had the black population tripled, but an estimated two million head of native cattle now grazed land delineated by law to less than 38 million acres. [7] Without laws to enforce proper land management in the reserves, and since the government enjoyed no authority, individual native commissioners could do no more than urge the destocking of cattle. This quite naturally struck a hollow note with many a black man who could point to rich and empty lands in the European areas. However, be that as it may, as things stood, the signs were all beginning to point to a crisis in reserves.

Concerns for the well-being of the native reserves and the landscape in general were not by any means new. As early as 1913, the Chief Native Commissioner of Southern Rhodesia felt obliged to comment on the question of land tenure in his annual report. “The conversion of native land tenure from the communal to the individual system,” he wrote, “is the true basis on which the progress of the natives is to be evolved”.

As chairman of the newly formed Natural Resources Board, Humphrey Gibbs made it his particular vocation to create a broader awareness of conservation issues. Until the 1950s, however, his efforts were aimed mainly at his fellow commercial farmers. During the consolidation years, most of these had tended to put matters of survival ahead of the intelligent use of the land. By the late 1940s, however, those days were mostly behind them, and in his first and perhaps only substantive speech to Parliament, Humphrey Gibbs tried to turn the attention of his fellow legislators to conditions in the reserves.

“I have been to most of the [native] reserves,’ he remarked, ‘when associated with the Natural Resources Board. I do not suppose the house realises their deplorable state and the enormous amount of work to be done.”

Work had in fact been underway for some time, thanks mainly to the efforts of the various missionary schools, and arguably the most progressive of these was the American Missionary Board training centre in Mount Selinda. At work here during the 1950s was a certain Emory Alvord, a native of Salt Lake City in Utah, and one time Pacific Coast wrestling champion. Since 1919 he had been in the employ of the American Missionary Board, trying to introduce progressive farming practices to the local blacks. His methods were simple, and on his own experimental plots, dramatically successful. On the occasions that he demonstrated his high yields on marginal land to black farmers, they were invariably impressed, tending, however, to attribute the miracle to witchcraft. Alvord instructed the pupils who had carried out the work of digging manure into the soil to describe the process to his audience, but the youngsters explained in translation that the manure was a ruse and that Alvord crept out in the night to sprinkle medicine on the soil.

Alvord pioneered the idea that rural blacks could not be forced to transcend the superstitions surrounding their agricultural practices. A black farmer, he said, needed to “see things demonstrated on his own level, within

his reach, by demonstrators of his own black skin and ‘kinky wool”. He established a system of training black agricultural demonstrators by taking a piece of land strained by overuse and applying natural fertilisers available to the humblest farmer. He demonstrated how, within three years, the land and the soil could be reclaimed entirely.

By 1921, Alvord established at the Mount Selinda School a five-year course in agriculture, the first of its kind in Rhodesia, and a four-year rotation of crops on a school demonstration site. By 1924 he had compiled his experience into a booklet entitled *Helping the Heathen to Help Himself*. Included was a blueprint for promoting agricultural development, better housing, improved water supplies and more general sanitation for the native areas. The Southern Rhodesia Government later officially adopted this ground-breaking publication as a standard.

As impressed as all of this might have been, the message of conservation still had no meaning if nothing could be done in practical terms to enforce it, and enforcement could only be achieved by limiting the rights of blacks over their land in some way. However, central to the original Orders in Council was the understanding that this would never happen, and so in April of 1951, the ‘Native Land Husbandry Bill’ was cautiously introduced into Parliament. This represented the aggregate of all the intelligence so far gathered on the subject of land management. Contained within it was a wide-reaching law intended to achieve nothing less than an agricultural revolution. It summed up the teaching of thirty-years and made it possible for the first time to enforce what hitherto had been mainly a matter of persuasion.

The Native Land Husbandry Bill proposed granting the government powers to divide up the land in the native reserves, and to allocate it in equal lots to every individual who had rights in those reserves. In some areas, this would amount to as much as sixty acres per head, while in more congested reserves, allocations might be as little as one and a half acres. These land rights would be supplemented by grazing rights for as many cattle as it was calculated the land could support, they would be held by an individual and would be negotiable but not divisible. Such land rights, however, were to be both transferable and heritable, although the holder could be forced to sell if he had three times been cited for failure to protect his land, or use it properly. It was envisaged that eventually the stage would

be reached when cultivation would be prohibited except by the registered holders of farming rights on specified plots.

The Native Land Husbandry Bill was intended to come into effect in stages. In a typical area, a survey would first collect information regarding the number of residents, the number of families entitled to cultivate, the amount of land available and how much was fit for cultivation. This would make possible decisions as to the size of an arable holding, and the number of cattle that might go with each. There would be a great deal of preparatory work in the form of demarcating holdings, contouring and terracing and the provision of boreholes and dip tanks. If successful, a whole new class of professional black farmers would be created. In time the system would leave no place in the reserves for those who presently alternated between the countryside and the city, achieving very little in either.

The dark side of the plan was that many would be dispossessed, and whole generations would emerge with no access to land at all. This was fine insofar as it presupposed the emergence of a permanently urbanised class of working blacks, but it was self-defeating ultimately because the Land Apportionment Act forbade this. Blacks, as a consequence, wholeheartedly and almost without exception rejected the Native Land Husbandry Bill. The reasons for this were as many as they were obvious. Apart from destocking and dispossession, the devolution of the powers of land allocation from traditional chiefs to the Native Affairs Department was very unpopular. The Commissioner and the members of his department would gain broad discretionary powers on top of what many blacks felt was already excessive power. Along with this, there was a sort of subconscious feeling that no matter what the white man did or said, it should be rejected on principle.

Hardwicke Holderness was again approached, this time by the Southern Rhodesia African Association, for help in preparing a memorandum listing black concerns for the consideration of the Select Committee looking into the Native Land Husbandry Bill. The Southern Rhodesia African Association was one of an early raft of indigenous alliances, in this case purporting to be the voice of traditional native authority. While the chiefs had suffered much erosion of their influence since the advent of European administration, they still retained some residual authority, and one or two of them, Chief Mangwende in this case, still wielded a powerful moral influence.

Chief Mangwende was a relatively modern and progressive man with an equally reformist and educated wife. He was among a handful who bridged the divide between the disaffected urban class of mainly young blacks and the more conservative element still desiring dialogue with the government. For those few with the initiative to try, reconciling their obligations towards the administration and their loyalty to their people would prove a thankless task. Like Charles Mzingeli before him, Chief Mangwende's voice would soon be stilled by the young, educated and militant nationalists. However, although perilously close, the moment of the complete usurpation of traditional authority by the nationalists had not yet arrived.

Mangwende's decision to engage a professional lawyer to compile a memorandum came about thanks to some novel advice given to him during a meeting of the National Affairs Association. United Party Member of Parliament, Dendy Young QC, a founding member of the National Affairs Association, pondered Mangwende's thoughts on the Native Land Husbandry Bill and offered his advice. While some version of the bill was necessary, he said, the likelihood of any changes to it being brought about through black representation was low. He suggested instead that the Association make representation to the relevant member of parliament.

Hardwicke Holderness took on the brief to prepare the necessary memorandum, during the process of which met and interviewed over a hundred chiefs. These were men who were mostly illiterate and uncertain of what exactly they wanted to say, although nonetheless very eager to say it. A general unease about the Native Affairs Department increasing its powers over them gradually opened a dam burst of accumulated grief, to the point that the interpreters and legal drafters were quickly overwhelmed. Very little of it was relevant, however, but nonetheless, wading through it caused the process of compiling a coherent memorandum to take several weeks.

The completed memorandum began with a lengthy recapitulation of the concerns of the government over the land issue. This was to make clear to the Select Committee that blacks understood the problem, and acknowledged that there was no easy solution. Although it was accepted that not every native had an inalienable right to land, it was also true that most were unable to provide secure conditions for their families in the cities. It was pointed out that this insecurity would cause black workers in the towns to rush to claim land in the reserves, believing this would be their

last chance to do so. This in itself would create unreasonable pressure on the land. Certainly few blacks would give up their right to land in the reserves if their existence in the cities and towns was dependent entirely on their jobs. What if they were dismissed? What if they grew old and could no longer work? It had become absolutely vital that some satisfactory tenure for blacks be made available in the cities.

Besides this, the memorandum urged that blacks be allowed an official voice in the deliberations. They could be given places on the various boards of assessors, while the native councils could be the chief vehicles for administering the law. Acknowledging their own inadequacy regarding effective local government, the chiefs also urged that a college be set up to educate them in the effective administration of their own affairs at a local level.

A clearer and more open invitation to co-operation could not have been made but, as was inevitable, the members of the Select Committee would not read into the memorandum the voices of the rural blacks themselves. Most members thought they were listening to the opinions of the 'clever boys' from the towns, and as an outspoken liberal, Hardwicke Holderness would probably have been regarded as a 'clever boy' himself, and his input viewed with the most profound suspicion. The select committee did take up a few of the recommendations, and amendments were made accordingly, so it could not be said that the entire effort was wasted. But it was not an unqualified success either, and probably – and perhaps predictably – the Southern Rhodesia African Association members were disappointed. The experience confirmed the underlying reality that one could not expect to get far in a representative system without voting power or direct representation. It was a salient point, but it is unlikely that anyone outside of the disenfranchised quarters appreciated it.

In the meanwhile, Hardwicke Holderness and other liberal whites involved in the National Affairs Association, founded a second organisation, the Interracial Association, as a further effort to promote cooperation and goodwill between the races. This was a very minor bulwark against the rising tide of nationalism, and the determined white blindness in refusing to acknowledge it. Such a gathering would have been unnecessary in the past, and probably impossible in the future, but was feasible only in that brief decade when the concept of 'partnership' remained untested. Guy Clutton-Brock, a fifty-year-old British missionary and Fellow of Magdalene

College Oxford, was a founder member, as was Charles Mzingeli, and V.S Naidoo, an Indian schoolmaster and a rare representative of the Asian community. A handful of coloureds were an obstreperous section of the membership and were often at odds with others over such embroiling themes as whether they preferred to be known as 'coloured' or 'Eurafrican'.

The black members, however, were the most important, and in many respects, they represented a cross section of the current nationalist leadership. One also gets the impression that they were willing to be partners in this effort only for so long as it was convenient, as in the meantime they groomed themselves and one another for a much more radical political approach. George Nyandoro, Nathan Shamuyarira, James Chikerema, Leopold Takawira, Jasper Savanhu, Chad Chipunza, James Moyo and others were at that point virtually unknown to the white Southern Rhodesian public. However, within twenty years, they would no longer be moderates, and to whites, their names would resonate as the bastard children of the revolution, and the whores of both Moscow and Peking. This ominous position was presupposed even in the Interracial Association's founding statement of principals, wherein a clear warning was struck:

"The Africans who are in the majority may expend their energy in opposition to the Europeans instead of working constructively to acquire the gifts of their civilisation. The Europeans may become the 'Herrenvolk' and the Africans 'Black Nationalists."

The truth of this would be made clear by, among others, Leopold Takawira, who would remark, on the eve of Southern Rhodesia adopting a new constitution in 1961, that:

"The African, with the aid and sympathy of the Asians and a few Europeans, is seeking ways and means of saving himself from the Sandys-Whitehead conspiracy. Some of the means chosen will, to the onlooker, seem crude and queer. But who really should morally criticise the clumsy strokes of a drowning man? The hunted African has now reached a point where he cannot advance any farther. He is faced with the problem of either sitting down to meet his death or facing the enemy in trying to escape."

Another tentative observer of this interracial *entente*, the Moses who had yet to take up his staff, was thirty-two-year-old Robert Mugabe. Mugabe impressed Guy Clutton Brock with his articulation, intelligence and chilly appraisal of the Association's efforts. "An extraordinary young

man," as he described Mugabe, "an ascetic, reluctant to come out from his shell, and with it something of a cold fish."

Mugabe also happened to be attending the regular meetings of another fringe organisation dedicated to racial coexistence, the enigmatic 'Capricorn Africa Society', founded by the legendary Special Air Services commander Colonel David Stirling. Stirling settled in Southern Rhodesia after the war and was dismayed to unearth what he considered to be a false paradise. An egotistical and wilful man, his vision, more elaborate than that of the Interracial Association, defined the usual tableau of a union of states under some vague formula for racial and political coexistence. As whimsical as Stirling's version of the future might have been, it still presupposed the acceptance, by at least a majority of whites, of the truth of their situation, and this, at that time, was simply asking too much.

Then something happened that somewhat put matters in perspective, proving rather depressing for those few whites who nurtured hope, and instructive for those many blacks that did not. Sometime in 1957, a Rhodesian-born black by the name of Patrick Matimba, a printer by trade, returned from study overseas with a white, Dutch-born wife by the name of Adriana van Hoorn. It was the first time such a thing had ever happened, and initially, Matimba and his wife faced something of a dilemma. Wherever they tried to settle, they would be in contravention of the Land Apportionment Act, and in the first instance, they had no choice but to seek the hospitality of Guy Clutton Brock and his wife Molly in their multi-racial community of St Faiths near Rusape.

News of this did not take long to reach the ears of local MP Norman Straw. A meeting of concerned citizens was held at the Rusape Country Club, and a great deal of outrage and table thumping followed. As far as Straw and his constituency were concerned, the Brocks were already a brace of race traitors, living cheek to jowl with the blacks, and the marriage of a black man to a white woman was just one step too far. The law did not prevent it, of course, but as many suspected, it would be precisely over this type of hurdle that the notion of racial partnership would ultimately stumble.

Norman Straw was a United Party member, and the difficulty for him, apart from his visceral horror for which there was no legislative cure, was that the Dominion Party, which emerged from the ashes of the old Liberal Party, was poised as a contender for power in Southern Rhodesia.

Straw's seat, it went without saying, would be the first to go if he was seen to be sanctioning something as subversive as interracial marriage. He brought the matter to the attention of the United Party parliamentary caucus, and some anxious deliberations followed on what precisely ought to be done.

As things stood, the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act contained a slight imbalance insofar as it banned extramarital sex between a black man and a white woman, but offered no such censure for white men doing the same thing. The two, however, were legally married, so no action could really be taken in this regard. It was decided, therefore, for lack of any alternative, to make the grandiose but politically impotent point of equalising the law to make extramarital sex between the races illegal for both men and women. The object was probably to provide a vehicle for the condemnation of miscegenation in general since nothing cut quite so cleanly to the quick of white racial consciousness than the image of a black man copulating with a white woman.

The debate drew in very few advocates of reason except, strangely, Winston Field, who was then a Dominion Party member of the federal legislature. Field's reaction was to dismiss all the fuss and urge his fellow honourable members to keep things in perspective. Dominion was the name of his party, and dominion its objective. The distasteful peccadilloes of an errant Dutch woman were entirely irrelevant, and he said as much.

Garfield Todd, however, was forced by the fury of the right to give the matter more recognition than it deserved. With the help of the CID, the Prime Minister ordered an informal inquiry into the extent of miscegenation and prostitution in the country, and he was informed when the report was complete that the traffic in commercial sex was confined mainly to coloured women and a growing number of blacks. Those few white women who were plying that trade were doing so on a higher level and at the better hotels. The CID, therefore, recommended no change in the law since it was hardly justified by the few white males who transgressed it. Furthermore, Todd was reminded, as others had been before him, that legislating against miscegenation or interracial relations would merely expose the offenders to ridicule and the threat of blackmail.

An amendment to the law was nonetheless discussed in the House, and a flurry of anxious debate followed, revealing the true depth at which this type of issue was felt among whites. A local doctor, however, when

consulted, made the point that in some thirty years of practice he had only dealt with four cases of white women falling pregnant to black men, and on each occasion, these were women of low mental development. A psychiatrist, he added, would be better suited to deal with these cases than a high court judge.

Todd, of course, was a missionary, a multi-racialist and a liberal advocate of black advancement. To him, such a retrogressive debate must have been challenging to take seriously. He plunged directly to the point in his own speech when he told the House that at first glance the issue was one of morality, and was being presented as such to him, but in truth, it was not an issue of morality but of racism. His suggestion to equalise the law over the question of miscegenation was to repeal it altogether and acknowledge the rights of human beings to interact as they chose. The simplicity of this, and its undoubted truth, naturally did not sit well. Analysts of Rhodesian politics have often pointed to this moment as the beginning of the end, not only of racial partnership but also of Todd himself. The House voted in favour of the amendment, although in the event no change was made to the law. Notable, however, was the fact that Garfield Todd sided with the minority, and that a majority of both his cabinet and backbenchers voted against him.

In March 1957, a report was published that would pit the territorial government of Southern Rhodesia against the Federal, and Garfield Todd against Roy Welensky. The issue was the franchise and the lingering question of black representation. Six years earlier, Godfrey Huggins had temporarily resolved the problem by increasing the monetary qualification from an annual income of £100 or property worth £150, as it had been set in 1914, to £240 and £500 respectively. This temporarily protected the franchise by placing it beyond the reach of a majority of blacks, at least until a more permanent solution could be found, but by the late 1950s, a growing number of blacks were able to meet it. In 1953, for example, only 441 blacks were named on the common roll, against a total white electorate of 48,870. In June 1957, however, there were 764, and by mid-August of the same year, that number had risen to 1,060. Asian and coloured voters combined exceeded the black total, with 1,164 names listed, and although still minimal, these increases were steady enough to register concern among white legislators and community leaders.

The fundamental requirement at that moment was not additional obstruction, because that would soon begin to affect white voters, but to convince the growing corps of black nationalists that whites were genuine in their desire for partnership. A majority of whites remained convinced that appointed white members responsible for native issues was sufficient, but this strategy could only be sustained for so long. Tensions were growing to the extent that even the most deluded whites could no longer deny it. Similar tensions were mounting elsewhere in British Africa too, and with the creation of Ghana out of the old colony of the Gold Coast, black nationalists across the region were beginning to sense victory. The only way to nip a general native uprising in the bud was to convince blacks that real and tangible change could be fought for, and realised within the constitution, and the only way that this could happen was for the franchise to be opened up a lot more than it already was. The problem, of course, lay in the fact that a majority of whites knew precisely what kind of change was envisioned by the black nationalists, and they did not like it.

Sir Robert Tredgold, who was by then Federal Chief Justice, and a man of widely respected integrity and humanity, was one of few whites able to appeal to the trust of both races. It was for this reason that he was appointed to chair a commission to study and report on a fair system of representation whereby power could be kept in the hands of 'civilised and responsible persons'. The wording of this mandate, devised by Todd, was vague enough to obscure to a nervous white electorate that Todd was, in fact, seeking a more liberal franchise, a nuance that Tredgold, of course, appreciated fully.

'Civilised and responsible persons' would obviously have meant different things to different people, but to quite a few, perhaps the majority, the words 'black' and 'civilised' represented an oxymoron. Todd, however, was trying to balance a message to whites that his primary concern was to protect the franchise against black encroachment while at the same time trying to convince blacks that he was doing precisely the opposite. He was reported in the *Rhodesia Herald* as declaring that the majority of black voters were barely literate and that it was: "…the responsibility of the Government to safeguard the position without further delay and it is working towards that end."

This, in the meanwhile, was in sharp contrast to the actions and words of Roy Welensky, who was at last attending to the issue of the

Federal franchise. It will be remembered that an incongruity existed within the Federation between the voting laws of Southern Rhodesia and her two sister territories to the north. The Southern Rhodesian common roll was in theory open to all, while under the gubernatorial systems in the north, voting was restricted to British citizens and not British Protected Persons. This created a theoretical imbalance across the Federation for which a solution needed to be devised, and this was Welensky's responsibility.

In direct contrast to Todd, Welensky sought to establish more restricted access to the vote across the board, but he tended to couch the verbiage around the issue in politically liberal terms for the ears of Her Majesty's government. This type of posturing was one of the more bizarre features of the times, for in order not to upset the white voters, discreet liberals like Todd were forced to appear reactionary, while genuine reactionaries like Welensky were forced to appear liberal. While it was not possible under these circumstances for the two men to draw their ideological differences out into the open, it was this differing view of the franchise that set the stage for the defining struggle between them.

When his report was finally released, Tredgold appeared to have adroitly struck the necessary balance. Obviously, a system of universal suffrage was impossible, and in his analysis Tredgold confirmed this, adding that limiting the franchise to those who could exercise it with reason, judgement and public spirit was justified. He then went on to observe that recent events in Africa had tended to prove that appeals to nationalism were highly effective in channelling the black vote in a detrimental direction, and if simple natives were prepared to so easily squander their own political wellbeing, how could they be expected to understand and protect the interests of the white man. He was, however, also quick to acknowledge that the application of a race-orientated franchise was inherently wrong, and could only be tolerated in a civilised society on the understanding that it was a strictly temporary expedient.

"An uneducated peasant", he wrote, "from a remote area, might possibly be able to form some sort of judgment upon the personal qualities of a candidate. But under our system of parliamentary government, that is not enough. A voter must be able to form an opinion as to the true merits of the policy for which the candidate stands. This he certainly could not do." As for its recommendations, the Tredgold Commission proposed that the

country neither divert from the common roll nor be drawn into any system of separate race representation.

Under Welensky's proposals, on the other hand, two voter categories would be established: ordinary and special. Two voters rolls would be implemented, the 'general roll', predominantly European, and the 'special roll', predominantly black. The general roll would vote for forty-four members out of a fifty-nine-member legislature, while voters on the special roll would elect eight 'special' black members and one European member from Southern Rhodesia who would be specifically concerned with black interests.

Tredgold's recommendations were more complicated, and successfully maintained the concept of the common roll, but only just. He recommended a sliding scale starting with an income qualification of £60 a month, with sufficient literacy to fill out a form, progressing to an income of £40 a month with primary education, and finally £25 a month with four years of post-primary education. He then proposed a 'special' qualification of £15 a month with literacy. The special vote would be subject to devaluation so that its influence could not count for more than half of the total votes cast by the other three classifications.

Todd was pleased with this, and although it remained to be seen how the matter would be treated in Parliament, it at least set the tone for positive change. In truth, however, the hope that this change would be sufficient to convince the blacks of their future in the current system, and tear them away from the piper's call of black nationalism, was at best a slender one. And as expected, the report was greeted in the House with caution. While it was widely understood that change was inevitable, the desire to complain about it was often too strong to resist. The special qualification received equally special attention, with many different variations on the same theme being suggested. All of these were contorted to appear as fair as possible while taking care to ensure that no possibility of a political threat to white hegemony emerged. The enfranchisement of wives on their husband's qualifications, for example, attracted an amendment put forward by Norman Straw to exclude those in polygamous marriages, which would, of course, bar a majority of black females no matter what their general ability to qualify might be.

Welensky, of course, was openly hostile to the entire concept, but the British Government took the cautious view that while Todd and

Tredgold were well-meaning, they were also a little misguided. The Commonwealth Relations Office tended to support Welensky, and even the United States Consul General in Salisbury made it known that he thought Todd was rushing things. This may have been so, but Todd seemed to be the only one to realise that time was perilously short. In fact, it was not inconceivable that time had already run out. What Todd had accomplished was in truth no more than a cosmetic advance, and certainly not enough to wholly, or even in part satisfy black aspiration. For this small victory, however, he had placed his head firmly on the block.

On 21 August 1957, the bill was passed with a modest amendment to the special qualification, and the ban on polygamous marriages thrown out altogether. The special qualification was finalised as an income of £240 per annum with literacy. A fifth qualification of a standard eight education was also added. Instead of operating on a sliding scale, however, the influence of the special vote would be moderated by 'closing the door' when votes registered on these qualifications exceeded twenty per cent of the number of ordinary voters.

The Bill did not pass without some brinkmanship from Todd, however, and not without political cost to him either. While the issue was still under debate, he delivered a speech to the Interracial Association where, with dangerous candour, he made his personal feelings clear. He assured his audience that it was not his intention to let European standards decline, but rather to invite an increasing number of blacks to rise to them He remarked that every man and woman, after all, as Tredgold had been bold to point out, has a right to find his place in the sun.

"We are in danger of becoming a race of fear-ridden neurotics." He said. "Rhodes felt that when a man had so far accepted civilisation as to be a working, wage-earning citizen, sufficiently educated to read and write, he was entitled to a voice in the government of the country. The Federal Government, to our great disappointment, announced the continuation of the racial pattern. Southern Rhodesia must uphold Rhodes‟ liberal dictum of equal rights for all civilised men, regardless of colour."

Todd then went on to threaten that he would no longer be prepared to lead his party if anything less than this was achieved. The Act was promulgated on 18 October 1957, but five members of Todd's caucus turned their backs on him and voted with the opposition, and if nothing else, this sent the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister a clear message.

Todd, however, had crossed the Rubicon, but he was standing on the far bank entirely alone. He had moreover exposed his political naiveté by revealing himself beyond a shadow of a doubt to be a liberal. Furthermore, by choosing the Interracial Association as his platform, he identified himself with the most liberal bloc of the white electorate. This not only antagonised his cabinet and party colleagues but also rendered his leadership a political liability in the eyes of the nation.

This moment can be regarded as another critical turning point in the history of Rhodesia. It was the moment at which white Rhodesian society, having accepted partnership in principal, began to reject it in practice. It was also the moment that blacks started to realise that the small flame of hope nurtured under Todd was guttering on the verge of extinction. It is no coincidence that a reformed African National Congress held its inaugural congress a month after the franchise reform was published. Most insultingly, this was done on Pioneer Day, the most revered date on the Southern Rhodesian calendar. Joshua Nkomo was elected president, James Chikerema vice-president and George Nyandoro secretary-general. The ANC was the first of the muscular, militant and angry black organisations formed in Southern Rhodesia, and others would follow. It was an ominous moment indeed. The truth of the situation was finally apparent to all. If whites could not trust blacks sufficiently to share power with them, and vice versa, then, in the words of Todd himself, the alternative to negotiation would be bloodshed.

Welensky, in the meanwhile, had just completed a series of meetings with the United Kingdom Government, and, three days before the publication of the Tredgold report, he returned from Britain having secured some valuable constitutional concessions. Interesting among them was the enlargement of the Federal Assembly from thirty-six to sixty members, which had the immediate effect of diminishing the value of the eight seats held by blacks. Further to this, the British Government agreed the following: it would not legislate on behalf of the Federation except upon its request; it would allow the Federation greater control over its external affairs; it delivered a categorical statement against any territory seceding from the Federation; it agreed that the civil service would be locally based, and finally that the Federal Constitutional Review Conference, permitted by the Orders in Council, would be held sometime in 1960. Welensky was explicitly assured, and this is of vital importance to events as they would

later unfold, that during the conference a programme to enable the Federation to achieve full independence within the Commonwealth would be discussed.

All these were important political achievements that, in contrast to Todd's apparent fumbling, presented Welensky as a forceful politician able to stand up to, and indeed dictate terms to Her Majesty's Government. The white population of the Federation was also now emboldened into believing that they no longer needed to delve too deeply into partnership, and that the handful of cosmetic changes already underway, along with a chorus of cooing assurances, were all that was needed to calm the British, and guide the Federation in the direction of independence. After that, the blacks could like it or leave it. Of Welensky's minor concessions to the UK Government, the most important was his assurance that in due course a 'reasonable number' of 'protected persons' would become eligible for the franchise.

The Federal Electoral Bill was duly put before the Federal Parliament and was carried on 31 July 1957, with no second reading, becoming law the following year. The new law, however, amounted to 'differentiating legislation', so it was immediately referred to the British Government by the African Affairs Board. Almost as if by prearrangement, the Tory government brushed aside Labour objections and the Bill was approved. Blacks were once again outraged, and this time their outrage spread across the entire breadth of the Federation.

Welensky, however, ignored these protests. He had no reason at that point to suspect that the British Government would be anything less than true to its word, and as a consequence, he felt that he had little to lose by alienating the blacks a little more. This, of course, was in stark contrast to Todd, who at that moment was in crisis. Since the Patrick Matimba affair, and Todd's unwillingness to countenance any change to the law, his intentions in the light of the liberalised franchise were suspect. He had earlier amended the Land Apportionment Act to accommodate certain changed circumstances of the Federation. These included provision for the multiracial university, the loosening of restrictions in city centre hotels to allow for black visitors to the Federation and the granting of leave for Herbert Chitepo, the first black man to qualify as an advocate in Rhodesia, to occupy chambers in the city centre.

Small victories indeed, but they came at a hefty political price, and to balance things out a little, Todd issued stern warnings to the ANC to keep

within the law, responding demonstrably to any sign of black labour unrest. Indeed, on 1 February 1954, when 9,000 black workers at the Wankie collieries went on strike for a cash payout instead of the food rations, Todd tried to make the point that he was not too soft on blacks at all by sending in the army and police. Raising his voice on the matter, Godfrey Huggins described this response as 'trigger happy'.

The white minimum wage at that time was some thirty times the black minimum, so for the most part, black worker's grievances were fair. The police were given powers to search all premises and make preventative arrests, to expel from the district for thirty-days any persons suspected of agitation, and to imprison for one year any person 'committing an act, or making a declaration calculated to provoke a stoppage or hindrance of essential services'. In a slightly softer tone, Todd added assurances to those blacks who might have been shocked at receiving such a hard smack from the Sunday School teacher that "the gap between black and white standards of living must be narrowed as quickly as possible". Despite this adroit performance, in the end, he failed to assuage the unease felt by his colleagues, who still perceived that his concern rested primarily with the wellbeing of the blacks.

This view of Todd was not helped in the slightest by his complete and utter lack of personal racism and the apparent esteem in which he was held by various native organisations and influential blacks. He had led the white population of Southern Rhodesia in a particular direction but found that they would not follow him all the way. Todd was drifting down the same road as his amaNdebele predecessor Lotje. When the ramifications of the truth he had recently spoken became too much for the nation to bear, he would be taken out and morally executed.

Indeed, he and Welensky now occupied such diametrically opposing positions that one or other of them had to go. How significant a role Welensky played in the rebellion against Todd that followed is difficult to say, and it has remained a matter of fruitful speculation ever since. If one considered that he was able to achieve the very worst for Todd by doing nothing at all, it is possible that he did a great deal. The tide of fortune was running so strongly in his favour that all he needed to do was ride the swell on his considerable bulk while ignoring the cries of a drowning Todd.

It might be remembered too that the United Party, which Godfrey Huggins had helped to form out of the ashes of the Rhodesia Party almost

thirty-years earlier, had given birth to the Federal Party when Huggins moved on to fight the first Federal election. Because they shared both an ideological root and many common branches, the United Party, lately known as the United Rhodesia Party, and the Federal Party were in effect sister organisations. The suggestion had therefore been on the table for some time that the two parties should merge, which would be in line with the only opposition in the territory, the Dominion Party, which was set up to fight both regional and federal elections from a single platform.

Todd was ambivalent about these proposed changes but allowed himself to be swept along by the mood of his party, notwithstanding that a merger would dilute what limited support he still enjoyed in his own chapter of the Party. The matter was discussed at the annual conference of the United Rhodesia Party on 20 September 1957, where Todd was not alone in the realisation that a merger would weaken his position. Welensky realised it too. Although Welensky still regarded Todd as a political threat, he saw him at this stage less as a rival than as a liability. It was evident that Todd had succeeded in antagonising all but a narrow minority of left-leaning liberals, although even as a mere territorial prime minister he still could bring the current Federal government to its knees.

Two dissidents in Todd's caucus orchestrated a challenge in parliament to his leadership. Consensus could not be reached, however, and the motion did not carry. The decision to merge with the Federal party was agreed to, and then referred to the Federal Party Congress held in Ndola in November of that year. There was broad support in the Federal Party for a merger, so there seemed no doubt that it would proceed. At that point Todd travelled to the Eastern Highlands for a short break, leaving behind a brooding cabinet. His timing, however, was critical a blunder, since it left the field temporarily open to Welensky and his allies.

Welensky returned to Salisbury from Ndola in buoyant mood, having achieved his aim of a party merger. It was broadly agreed within the Southern Rhodesian territorial cabinet that the chances of Todd leading the new party – now called the United Federal Party – to victory at the next election were negligible. Passions were running high, and Todd was shocked on returning from Inyanga to hear reports of an open revolt. The temper soon cooled though, and when Todd confronted the rebels the following day, language was somewhat more restrained, and the mood muted. He agreed to some concessions including severe action against the

ANC, by then aggressively mobilising in the countryside, and an agreement to accept an amendment to the Immorality Act. As part of his closing speech to the caucus he declared:

> I speak with humility, but with conviction and some knowledge, when I say that my removal from office at this moment would be widely interpreted to indicate a rejection of Southern Rhodesia's moderately liberal stand or at least a step back from it. I also know that to the great African section of our population this is how the position would appear…
>
> The position today is disturbing and serious. On the race relations side it cannot be denied that my leadership of this party represents to the African almost his sole hope that Partnership is not an empty word but a genuine and honest policy held by a majority of Europeans in this country…
>
> I know that enormous pressures are being built up to have me removed from office and if they are successful, I believe that my going will remove a deterrent which at present exists against extremism of a kind we abhor. This is a simple and sincere statement of fact, and responsible men will wish to consider it…

Todd then went on to commit precisely the same blunder, before adding two more to it. In mid-December he left with his wife for a month's holiday in the Cape, departing on the very day that regulations were published setting out a thirty per cent rise in the native minimum wage, that Todd had more-or-less decreed. Why he chose this particular moment to tamper with native wages, it is hard to imagine, but in doing so, he immediately lost what limited big-business support he had hitherto enjoyed. Perhaps more damaging still, he handed his cabinet colleagues the perfect pretext to support claims of dictatorial behaviour. Moreover, on the eve of his departure, he informally met with Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole and Guy Clutton Brock, the only white member of the ANC. This unauthorised and unrecognised meeting did Todd enormous damage in the eyes of his party. Ian Smith, whose derisive language towards Todd in his memoirs, *The Great Betrayal*, hints strongly at the general antipathy felt towards him, commented on the meeting thus:

“The question came to a head when his cabinet colleagues discovered that behind their backs, he was involved in talks with Joshua Nkomo and the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, the leaders of the newly revived Southern Rhodesia African National Congress, which was engaged in a massive intimidation campaign in the battle for support among their own people. Clearly, this placed them in the category of terrorist leaders.”

The United Federal party, in the meanwhile, was now entirely controlled by the Welensky faction, and it was not difficult over the Christmas period, with all these issues in mind, for him to throw punches at Todd while Todd was not in the ring. As a general election loomed, calls for Todd’s purging grew shrill. He returned to the colony from South Africa to be met at the airport by one of his MPs, Patrick Fletcher, bearing the news that the resignation of the entire cabinet was imminent.

At first, Todd did not take the matter too seriously, but as the day progressed he began to realise that he was dealing with a genuine crisis. The following morning a cabinet meeting was held, and Todd found himself under sustained attack. This time the main complaint was an irregular procedure in the granting of a wage rise to the blacks. In the event, it was shown that Todd had, albeit somewhat vaguely, followed the necessary protocol. Thereupon the attack became more general, but aimed more-or-less at his pandering to the rights and wellbeing of the blacks. Individual complaints were wide-ranging, but the entire cabinet did agree on at least one thing, that Todd had become a liability and had to go.

Todd calmly, but nonetheless with his voice shaking, asked each member if they intended to withdraw their support, to which every one replied in the affirmative. It seemed that the Prime Minister was faced with a *fait accompli,* and the rebel cabinet supposed that he had no choice but to resign. As a matter of form, he was given twenty-four hours to think it over. To the consternation of the members, however, he began proceedings the following day by turning the tables and accepting the resignations of the full cabinet. A few days later he announced a new cabinet, but with the writing on the wall, there was no air of permanence about it.

Meanwhile, battle lines were drawn. Todd’s unexpected display of tenacity simply polarised the party and precipitated the crisis. The last act was played out at a specially convened party conference held on 8 February 1958, attended by several hundred delegates. The original structures of the United Rhodesia Party had been superseded by the creation of the United

Federal Party, and Todd found himself facing a hostile convention packed with Welensky supporters. Most of the original members of the United Rhodesia party stood by their chief and, had the vote rested with them, there is every chance that Todd would have survived. More than 200 black members of the United Federal Party also pledged their support to him.

On the first ballot, after a combative speech lasting two hours, Todd was gratified to see his chief rival, Patrick Fletcher, bringing up the rear in a field of three. On the second ballot, Todd retained his 129 votes, but all Fletcher's support switched to the 'dark horse' candidate, Edgar Whitehead. Whitehead, now Sir Edgar Whitehead, received 193 votes, and to his immense surprise became the new leader of the party and *de facto* prime minister.

Throughout the entire meeting, Welensky maintained a determined silence, a performance very different from his usual style. Bearing in mind that a single word from him could have changed Todd's fate, his silence was considered significant. The closing comments of the episode, however, go to Garfield Todd himself: "In Africa, there is never enough time." He said. "The hands have come off the clock, and it is later than we think."

Garfield Todd

14
My luck has always been on the thin side

Doctor Banda denies civil war – **The Times**, 12 December 1964

The golden years of the Central African Federation were its first years of strong economic growth and apparent political and social progress. These early successes tended to confirm to the architects of the experiment that it was working and that the Central African Federation could look forward to a long and prosperous life. To whites, in general, there seemed every reason to suppose that a trial period of continued supervision by Whitehall would lead seamlessly to full independence in the Commonwealth. For the short duration of Huggins' leadership, there was the air about it all of a respected old man completing his valedictory term, leaving the substantive issues to be attended to once he had gone. Not surprisingly, then, at the moment that Huggins hung up his briefcase, and Welensky took over, the wheels came off. Old Sir Roy Welensky, that large, bluff and avuncular man, could hardly be blamed, therefore, when he was heard to grumble that his luck in the matter had been on the thin side.

Welensky may have been a victim of bad luck, some indeed are, or he may just have been too wedded to outdated policy, and unwilling to move with the times, as some also are. There is also, of course, the unfortunate fact that he took the helm of the federal ship almost at the moment that the entire British Empire began to fall apart at the seams. On 26 July 1956, just four months before Welensky was due to take office, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser upset the British applecart by seizing the Suez Canal Zone. After a year of gathering tensions in the Middle East, Britain was plunged into her first severe foreign policy crisis since World War II and the first in recent history that she did not eventually suppress.

One of Welensky's first tasks in office was to offer Prime Minister Anthony Eden the full support of the Central African Federation in dealing with the Suez Crisis. This meant nothing, of course, and Britain was humiliated. A three-point alliance of Britain, France and Israel moved in on the Canal Zone to restore Anglo-French legitimacy, and to allow Israel the opportunity to secure the Sinai Peninsular. Militarily, the operation was a success, but diplomatically it was an utter disaster. United States President Eisenhower, bristling at not being informed in advance, took the three

belligerents by the scruff of their necks and shook some sense into them. The Israelis duly withdrew from the Sinai, and the British and French were chastened to acknowledge Egyptian primacy over the canal. It was a moment of profound humiliation for the British, and the instant that the British imperial bubble burst.

Gamal Nasser, no doubt inflated by winning the moral war after so conspicuously losing the shooting war, positioned himself as the champion of the oppressed masses of Africa. “We cannot!” He thundered. “Under any circumstances remain aloof from the terrible and sanguinary struggle going on in Africa today between five million whites and two hundred million Africans. We shall not stand idly by in the belief that it will not concern us.”

Africans sat up and took notice, and the English speaking race finally abdicated it’s God-given right to rule. The first of the 200 million achieved their liberty when the Gold Coast was granted independence on 6 March 1957. The first black statesman to emerge from under British protection was the messianic rabble-rouser Doctor Kwame Nkrumah, and his coming out was celebrated in grand style. Nkrumah, as profoundly ambitious as he was paranoid and isolated, embraced the role of the father of African liberation, allowing himself to picture a pan-African liberation movement with himself at its head. The handover was celebratory, and although the last Governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, led the ceremony with all of the dignity of his viceregal office, it was the more colourful recipients of power who were granted more significant attention. It indeed was a bittersweet moment for the British people.

One particular guest at the independence celebrations was a Nyasa medical doctor by the name of Hastings Banda. Banda, although still rather an obscure figure in the Nyasaland nationalist movement, was nonetheless rising steadily, thanks mainly to his organisation and leadership of the Nyasaland anti-Federation protest movement. He was a medical doctor twice qualified, first at the Meharry Medical College in Nashville Tennessee, and again at the University of Edinburgh. Later he established a busy general practice in Harlesden, North London, and for all intents and purposes was ageing in quiet and comfortable anonymity. He was a physically unprepossessing man, habitually dressed in a dark, three-piece suit, a homburg hat and a pair of dark sunglasses. What he lacked in physical stature, however, he made up for in conceit and ambition. If

Kwame Nkrumah had been a dream to the Colonial Office, then Hastings Banda was about to become its nightmare.

As much as Hastings Banda was awed by the deep symbolism of Ghanaian independence, he was enchanted by the cries of 'Saviour' and 'Messiah' that followed Kwame Nkrumah wherever he went. This adulation ignited an idea in the little doctor's mind that one day he too could be a black messiah. As a consequence, it took very little persuasion for him to abandon his medical career and return home to Nyasaland when the call came for him to lead the local chapter of the African National Congress. It is interesting to note that Banda had been out of Nyasaland for so long that he was no longer fluent, or even conversant in his native language. His birth date was never recorded, so his age has always been a matter for speculation, but it is probable that he was about fifty-six at this time.

It is unlikely that Banda would have entered the trenches of the national struggle if he had not been reasonably confident of victory, and events in Ghana, and all over British Africa at that time gave him the confidence. Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia were all poised to inherit their own impendence with a minimum of preamble, and while Kenya was resisting, thanks to its large settler population, the writing was certainly on the wall. All that was lacking was a plausible pretext upon which Banda could stage as dramatic a return to Central Africa as possible, and fortunately for him and his backers, Sir Roy Welensky was about to provide precisely that.

Welensky was also watching events in Ghana, and he too realised that it all served to fire the blood of local nationalists. The ease with which the territories to the north appeared to be slipping through the fingers of their colonial masters was spreading hope throughout central and southern Africa, and that was a dangerous precedent, and one that Welensky was anxious to disavow in any territory that he was in charge of.

For the time being, however, the Crown seemed eager to confirm its ongoing support for the Federation, which was perhaps a source of some comfort. Britain, however, was increasingly to be found adrift on unpredictable seas, and her course progressively less reliable. It will be remembered that in April 1957, Roy Welensky visited London to press for his five critical constitutional concessions, the most important of which was that Whitehall would not countenance a motion for any territory to secede from the Federation. His anxiety that the Colonial Office be quite

categorical on this point was understandable, and he won that point. He also succeeded in obtaining a firm date for the convening of the all-important Federal Constitutional Review Conference. Initially scheduled for 1962, he was able to persuade Whitehall to move it forward to 1960. Most importantly, however, he secured a clear understanding that the principal objective of the Conference would be to examine the conditions under which the Federation would move towards complete independence, and once again this was, in his view at least, categorically confirmed.

With all this in the bag, Welensky returned home to Salisbury in a victorious mood. He had every reason to believe that he had pinned the British Government down on the question of the Federation's future, and that the territory could now survive the daunting possibility of a Labour government with some degree of confidence. He was not, however, immediately aware of the adverse effect that all his apparent political success was having on the blacks. The concessions were widely viewed in that quarter as a betrayal by Her Majesty of the Sacred Trust. The Crown was seen to have capitulated in the face of white pressure, which indicated that when it came down to it that the British would always come down on the side of their kith and kin.

This, of course, was not altogether untrue, but there were other factors in the mix too. What the blacks of the three territories did not take into account was that the Central African Federation was the only British overseas possession with an army under local command. More than once Welensky had been heard to mutter darkly that some of the more outrageous British suggestions would need to be backed up by an army. At the very least he had the power to declare unilateral independence. So as long as the blacks in the territory were passive, therefore, London had much to gain by keeping Welensky quiet. However, the blacks were aware of this fact too and consequently began to formulate a strategy significantly less passive than hitherto. They also recognised the significance of the pending Constitutional Review Conference and concluded that they had but a narrow window of opportunity to make their voices heard.

More fuel was thrown on a gathering native rebellion by the passage of the Federal Election Act. This appeared superficially to advance black interests but was, in reality, it was much less than that. By then most blacks had so lost faith in the franchise that it scarcely mattered how the Act was framed. Moreover, it represented precisely the kind of differentiating

legislation that was a cue for the African Affairs Board to refer it to the Imperial Government for review, and although the Board was heard over the matter, it was overruled after a lively Commons debate. The Federal Election Act, as well as the Constitutional Amendment Act of a year earlier were both approved. Church of Scotland Missionary, the Reverend Andrew Doig, a senior member of the African Affairs Board, resigned in disgust, declaring the Board an utter farce.

In the meanwhile, Hastings Banda returned to England from Ghana, and there waited for the appropriate moment to, as Welensky put it, “make his messianic descent on the land of his birth”. Welensky had obviously heard this sort of talk circulating among local black leaders, and it did not impress him at all. It impressed Banda, however, and he made no secret of that fact. Indeed, to the whites of Nyasaland, the signs of pending demagoguery were there for all to see. The fearsome prospect of an arrogant and deluded black popinjay, with a mission-funded education and an overwhelming desire to rule, struck to the heart of their fear. Banda took note of this, of course, and realised that the more outrageously conceited and power-hungry he appeared, the more his constituents loved him, and the more the whites feared him.

In London, as he was apprised of the concessions granted to the Federal Government, and the apparent impotence of the African Affairs Board to uphold its mandate, Banda understood that all of this played neatly into his hands, and he bided his time. In the meanwhile, in September 1957, a memorandum demanding significant reforms to the Nyasaland territorial constitution was prepared by the ANC, and presented to the Governor, Sir Robert Armitage, for his consideration.

Sir Robert was a mild-mannered man, not well disposed to unpleasant surprises like this, and after having recently burned his fingers very painfully in Cyprus, he was dismayed to see it all happening again. He sat at his desk in Blantyre and morbidly regarded a list of demands that he had neither the power nor the inclination to deal with. He therefore very warily put it to Congress that its proposals were too advanced, the aim of an all-African government by 1960 impractical and the expectation of universal adult suffrage highly unrealistic.

This was precisely what Banda was hoping for, and soon afterwards Congress invited Sir Robert to put forward proposals of his own. This he promised to do, but not before consultation with the other Federal partners

and the office of the Colonial Secretary. He then sat on the issue until November, when a second Congress deputation paid him a visit and inquired after his progress. Caught somewhat on the back foot, Armitage assured his visitors that he was due home on leave the following spring, at which point he would take the matter up with the Colonial Secretary.

This time Sir Robert Armitage was as good as his word, but he was perhaps guilty less of consulting than passing the buck. In turn, British Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd sat on the matter for a further month or two, possibly pondering the usual expedient of a commission of inquiry. Before he could act, however, Banda arrived at his office in London with a Nyasaland Congress delegation, and it was put to the Colonial Secretary in polite, but nonetheless, clear and unambiguous terms that further delays would not be tolerated. Lennox-Boyd was astonished, for never before had a British Colonial Secretary been approached thus in his own chambers, to be dressed down by an African.

However, a decision on the matter still rested ultimately with Sir Robert Armitage, so Lennox-Boyd assured Banda and his associates that he hoped to receive the Governor's recommendations by August 1958, almost a year after the original memorandum had been submitted. Welensky, in the meanwhile, anxiously observing all of this, was powerless to intervene. The focus of tension was Nyasaland, and the issue, therefore, resided with the territorial government. While he may have publicly expressed satisfaction at Armitage's progress, privately he was riddled with misgivings. Although he still hung his faith on the British Government's undertakings of the previous year, he was painfully aware that on the fate of Nyasaland, the territory that no one, not even itself, had wanted in the Federation in the first place, hung the fate of the entire union.

Banda, in the meanwhile, decided then that the moment was ripe, and prepared for his long-anticipated return. The date of his expected arrival was 29 June, and lavish preparations were made in Nyasaland to greet him. Placards proclaiming him 'President General Designate of Congress' were circulated, while a crowd of 3,000 gathered on the tarmac in keen anticipation. When the aircraft finally touched down, however, Banda did not appear. A rumour quickly circulated that communications had been tampered with and that a plot existed to kill the Messiah. The aircraft was searched from top to bottom, and dark threats to burn it were uttered when no sign of the doctor was unearthed. Banda, however, was at that moment

addressing a meeting in London, and arrived only a week later, stepping out onto the apron in Blantyre to the thrilling sight of 5,000 rapturous blacks greeting him as their saviour. He was immediately absorbed in a flurry of speeches and press conferences, before, in his own time, he made his way to Government House to meet with Sir Robert Armitage.

So Anglicised did Hastings Banda appear that Armitage was at first relieved to assess him not as a hot-blood rabble-rouser but a man of moderate temperament and high intellectual gifts. For Banda, by then probably already in or near his sixties, this was initially of no disadvantage. He adopted the public position that self-government in Nyasaland was to be achieved only with the consent of the Crown and using negotiation and non-violence. Sir Robert Armitage was beside himself with relief, but Banda had his measure, and he had an ace up his sleeve. These typically moderate sentiments were heard time and again, but when they were translated, as they had to be, from English into the local language, they usually assumed a much darker and more revolutionary tone. In the meantime, a full meeting of the ANC was held in Blantyre, where Banda was unanimously elected President General of the Party.

A few weeks later, Armitage announced that he had no immediate announcement to make. This was no less than Banda expected and events after that began to move quickly. Banda began a series of public meetings, and although maintaining at all times a moderate tone, the security situation in the territory began to deteriorate rapidly. Public meetings were tense, and a new mood of insolence took root as violent incidents flared throughout the region. Faced with an upcoming general election, Welensky did all that he could to calm the situation, but it remained a matter for the territorial government to resolve, and although deeply frustrated by Armitage's kid-gloved approach, there was still nothing that he could do until invited to do so.

His language, however, was stern and uncompromising. While he made it clear to the British that he was at all times willing to discuss constitutional changes, such discussions would be strictly moderated, and not driven by any violent reaction in the countryside. Nonetheless, he was alarmed when, on September 17 1958, a government White Paper was published dealing with the question of Northern Rhodesian constitutional reform. He appealed to the British Government through informal contacts to either modify or delay the release of any new proposals in the light of the

fact that he would soon have to face the polls. The two northern territories already sat on a knife's edge, and he did not need either a white or a black backlash. Despite his misgivings, however, the United Federal Party made a clean sweep, winning forty-six out of fifty-nine seats, after which Welensky settled in on his unsteady throne so see the crisis through.

Tensions in Nyasaland eased somewhat when Banda left the country in early December to attend the All Africa Peoples Conference in Ghana. This was Kwame Nkrumah's coming out as the uncrowned emperor of African liberation, and Banda was jubilant when it was announced by Nkrumah, mainly for his benefit, that "The Conference declares its full support of all fighters for freedom in Africa". Banda was feted, honoured and occasionally humoured before returning to Nyasaland in a mood of much-increased belligerence. As usual, his speeches and press interviews repeatedly forswore violence, but to these, he was now apt to add that violence could not be ruled out if it proved to be unavoidable.

In his memoirs of his fight for the Federation, Sir Roy Welensky's slide into despair now becomes evident, in particular as he dwells on the events of 1959. He still heard various earnest voices in the British Government assuring him of their commitment to the Federation, and their determination to see it work, but at the same time, he could not fail to notice signs of backsliding. He had at his disposal the power to deal with the unrest, and he would have done so had he not been bound by a plethora of frustrating limitations imposed on him by the Crown. As the man of Africa, he had so often tried to make the British see that whites on the ground were better able to deal with African affairs than out-of-touch bureaucrats in Whitehall. Although he could see exactly what was happening he was powerless to intervene. He gnawed his fingernails over Soviet and Chinese power play in Africa that in some ways succeeded in magnifying the simple moral issue at hand into something much more terrifying.

Banda, in the meanwhile, was touring the Nyasaland countryside and setting the hearts and passions of his people aflame. He had shaken himself free of all restraints and was soaring in revolutionary ferment. Violence in the countryside was escalating, although it was still isolated and spontaneous, and more-or-less within the capacity of the local constabulary to suppress. During one particular meeting, however, fifty female activists were arrested, in response to which Banda and his aide, one Henry

Chipembere, incited the crowd to descend on the police station in Zomba and violently effect their release.

The incident was the worst of its kind so far and prompted a revision by the Federal authorities of security measures in the territory. Regular Federal troops, territorials and the Air Force were put on standby in expectation of a rapid escalation of unrest in the months to follow. It was an anxious time. At a Congress conference, held at the end of January 1959, menacing threats were made against internal dissidents and 'quislings', while at the same time a call went out for 'brave men' to undertake a renewed campaign of violence. Clearly, Banda was challenging Armitage to meet violence with violence, as all the while the Governor himself slipped deeper into paralysis.

Welensky then appeared in Blantyre in person, and taking Armitage by the ear, tried to shake some sense into him. Banda was quite clearly courting arrest and detention, but since Britannia was no tyranny bristling with malice, he really had little to fear from that. On the other hand, the thought of having to resort to such action produced symptoms of apoplexy in Armitage. A joke in circulation among the Nyasa nationalists ran along the lines of: "When the British start arresting, full independence is around the corner."

It was agreed in Congress, in the meanwhile, that when that day came, a committee of four would take control of the Party and signal a pre-planned campaign of sabotage and violence. Before that, a low-level state of unrest would be maintained in preparation for a significant push. Prisoners from Zomba jail would be released on a signal to their prison guards and would augment frontline nationalist manpower. There was an expectation that help would come from neighbouring countries, but what form this would take was obscure. On 21 February, Federal troops were airlifted to Blantyre as a precautionary measure. The British press, in the meanwhile, was in ferment as comparisons were made to the gore and horror of the Kenya Emergency, and the violent excesses of the Mau-Mau.

On 23 February, pamphlets condemning the use of Federal troops were circulated throughout Limbe and Blantyre. Three days later, Edgar Whitehead declared a pre-emptive state of emergency in Southern Rhodesia, under which he took the opportunity to round up and detain more than 500 active members of the local ANC, and to ban the organisation. Joshua Nkomo, the leader of the ANC, commencing a pattern that would

become noticeable in the future, happened to be out of the country at the time, and avoided arrest. In the north of Nyasaland, a mob took over a customs post at Fort Hill on the Tanganyika border and occupied airfield runways to frustrate the landing of Federal Troops. On 27 February, the first shootings occurred.

The incident happened during the sitting of a tribal court. A local chief was repeatedly interrupted by a mob as he tried to deliver judgement on three men who had broken local agricultural rules. A detachment of the Kings African Rifles was brought up, and in a confusion of tear gas and controlled gunfire, one protester was wounded and another killed. Later, the British South Africa Police killed two more people, breaking a proud record of not having fired a shot in anger since the turn of the century. All in all, there were eleven casualties during the twelve days of the revolt, of which six were fatal.

On March 3, Sir Robert Armitage finally declared a state of emergency. White women and children were airlifted out of the territory, and troops deployed to strategic locations. The ANC and its women and youth leagues were proscribed, and in a stealthy dawn rain, the principal Congress leaders and coordinators, including Banda, were arrested and flown to detention in Southern Rhodesia. The planned uprising was stillborn, and what conflagrations escaped the pre-emptive clampdown were efficiently doused by police with the army in support. It was a slick piece of work, and Welensky, with some justification, was proud of himself.

If that could have been the end of the affair, however, Welensky would have had excellent grounds for celebration, but unfortunately, it was just the beginning. Naturally, the Crown despatched a commission of inquiry to look into the episode, and the subsequent Devlin Report drew not altogether unpredictable conclusions. It was Harold Macmillan, successor to Sir Anthony Eden as British Prime Minister, who most vitally concluded that the Nyasaland emergency was a turning point for the British view of central Africa. It had become apparent to Macmillan that humouring Welensky and the whites was not going to be the easy panacea that had been hoped. Black voices in the Federation had become altogether too loud, angry and insistent. The Nyasaland Emergency taught the British Government precisely the lesson that Banda hoped it would, that they would from then on have to listen much more carefully to him than to Welensky.

This was also exactly the kind of thing that Welensky had tried to guard against with his insistence on a definite undertaking from the British regarding their view of secession. It remained now for him to discover precisely how unreliable Her Majesty ministers could be. With just a subtle shift of emphasis, the British Government was now tearing off in an entirely new and unexpected direction. Once again all eyes were directed at the Constitutional Review Conference, now no more than a year away, but conditions on the ground had altered profoundly, and Welensky's certainty and confidence evaporated almost overnight.

Indeed, secession now became the clarion call of all nationalist protest in the Federation, and now that it had been effectively silenced, Hastings Banda's voice was louder than ever. The matter had been drawn into the sphere of British party politics, and with Labour gathering confidence, and casting around for a *casus belli,* it would be unbecoming of Macmillan to hand the means of his own defeat to the opposition. Instead, the Prime Minister did what respectable British statesmen had done since the birth of Parliament, and a Royal Commission of Inquiry was authorised.

The proposed commission was vaguely defined at first as being a tool to prepare the ground for the Federal Constitutional Review Conference, which immediately alarmed Welensky who was under the impression that the ground had already been prepared. His understanding, indeed, was that terms of independence were to be discussed, and that secession by any territory was not to be countenanced. So what had changed, and the answer, of course, was everything.

Welensky, therefore, resolved to fight any suggestion of a new commission tooth and nail, and so he did. When it became apparent, however, that the commission, due to be chaired by Walter Monckton, the 1st Viscount Monckton, Welensky applied himself to trying to steer the Commission's terms of reference into the narrowest possible space. Labour Leader Hugh Gaitskell, on the other hand, positioned himself as an ardent advocate of terms of reference as wide as possible, which served to shield Prime Minister Macmillan somewhat from the tempest of Welensky's rage. The Monckton Commission, Macmillan said, would set about finding ways to make the Federation work, but if unable to do so within its terms of reference, it would no doubt say so.

It is perhaps incidental that at the British polls on 8 October 1959, the Conservatives increased their parliamentary majority to 100 seats, for it

was too late by then to alter the course of events in Central Africa, even had the Tories been moved to do so. The Monckton Commission arrived in Salisbury in February 1960 and spent three months gathering evidence throughout the Federation. In early April it returned to London, and six months later its report was published.

In the meanwhile, Doctor Hastings Banda was visited in prison by his legal advisor, a British QC by the name of Dingle Foot. During a wide-ranging interview, Foot let it be known that although the Monckton Commission was tethered by certain limitations, and was under intense scrutiny from Salisbury, it would not be squeamish about giving serious consideration to the advantages of Nyasaland seceding from the Federation. Unknown to either Foot or Banda, however, the room was bugged, and in due course, Welensky felt the earth shift a little more beneath his feet.

Welensky's by then highly developed mistrust of the British was tuned to an even finer pitch when Macmillan twisted the peg a turn and insisted that Banda be released to give evidence to the Monckton Commission. Welensky gnashed his teeth and resisted, but he had limited grounds to refuse. Macmillan then set off on his now celebrated 'Winds of Change' tour of Africa, and nothing that he said during his addresses quenched the ardour of black nationalists.[8]

Before dawn on 1 April 1960, Banda was released unconditionally and flown to Blantyre where he met with Armitage and the new Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod. The two found Banda mildly chastened but unmoved over the question of constitutional reforms. Macleod was able to inform Welensky, after two days in close conference with Banda, that he believed the ANC President would endeavour to keep the peace. Even if Banda was unwilling to concede on any of his demands, he was at least prepared to move forward at a measured pace.

Upon that, Banda set off on a publicity tour of Britain where on arrival he promptly announced to the press that the Constitutional Review Conference was to be held in the summer of 1960 and that he intended to press for both immediate self-government for Nyasaland and secession from the Federation. Macleod was unimpressed and assured Welensky that despite this grandstanding, Banda would do what he was told, although it is hard to imagine that Welensky drew a great deal of comfort from that.

Then, at the end of June 1960, a shocking event seized the attention of both the region and the world. This was Congolese independence, the

first open and uncensored display of African independence at work. If the Nyasaland Emergency gave the whites of the Federation an unsettling glimpse into the future, it was the Congo Crisis that wrote large the reality of what lay around the corner. Surely the most supremely misguided words ever uttered on a political stage were those spoken by Patrice Lumumba on the day that the Belgian Congo was granted Independence.

"We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make the Congo the centre of radiance for the whole of Africa."

If these lofty sentiments were supposed to impress gathered dignitaries with promises of progress, peace and liberty, then all were soon to be sorely disappointed. Those apologists, who over the years have cried out that the handover was bungled, ought first to remember that it was bungled mainly because it was driven by too much haste. This was the determining lesson learned by whites of the Central African Federation, who watched anxiously as the ensuing tragedy unfolded.

The sequence of events that led to the Congo Crisis were nothing if not a cautionary tale. The Belgian authorities took fright at increasing black agitation in the colony, fearing a repeat of the French experience in Algeria, and essentially handed it over to whoever was in a position to receive it. That happened to be Patrice Lumumba, and very little if any preparations were made to prepare the ground. Having maintained an unbreakable glass ceiling, above which no black man could rise, there were no black military servicemen above the rank of senior NCO and no black civil servant beyond the office of departmental clerk or assistant. The army mutinied almost immediately, and a kaleidoscopic ethnic smorgasbord of tribes and clans were all soon at one another's throats. Secessions erupted here and there, and a nasty, bloody and thoroughly African bout of civil war saw the entire colony, one of the better managed European colonies in Africa, descend into utter anarchy.

The Congo tragedy had multiple facets and numerous conflicting crosscurrents that do not necessarily concern us here, but what the whole business did achieve was to confirm the worst fears of whites in all the remaining occupied territories. Rampant excesses among liberated blacks, the complete breakdown of law and order and the collapse of any civilised standards shocked whites to the core, confirming a majority determination to make no political concessions whatsoever to the blacks. If the natives

could reduce the relatively orderly, prosperous and well administered Belgian Congo to a smouldering heap in a few months, what could they do to any one of the territories of the Federation?

In July 1960, in the meanwhile, a new party was born out of the ashes of the reformed African National Congress in Southern Rhodesia, and with it came a touch of the Congo. The National Democratic Party was the African National Congress under a different name, and no sooner did the news of its birth circulate than the townships of Salisbury and Bulawayo erupted into an orgiastic celebration of violence. It was an inauspicious backdrop to the publication of the Monckton Report, which was released in mid-October.

It would be wrong to say that Sir Roy Welensky was entirely surprised by what he read when he sat down to review his copy of the report. Lord Monckton began by heaping much unsolicited praise on some of the more obvious achievements of the Federation, devoting endless verbiage to that which was commendable, but sweeping it all away with a few carefully chosen concluding paragraphs. In those paragraphs, the theme returned to the stale, intractable and inescapable reality of black resistance. *Drum* magazine, a mass circulation black periodical summed up the Monckton Report thus: “Their 175 pages of history-making reading can be summed up in three terse words: *It won’t work!”*

The architects of the Federation, including Lord Chandos, Andrew Cohen and not least, of course, Huggins and Welensky, had made absolutely no progress in satisfying blacks that their best interests were being served. Improvements brought about by the Federation had either not been sufficient, or the political disadvantages were just too great. “I know my Africans”, remarked Sir Edgar Whitehead, from within his perennial fog, “and they are not interested in politics.” Such delusions, of course, are deadly, and Kenneth Kaunda for one said as much. “Call an elephant a rabbit”, he warned, “only if it gives you comfort to feel that you are about to be trampled to death by a rabbit.”

By the time he finished reading through the report, Welensky would certainly have felt rather trampled, although the rabbit in this instance was not an obstreperous black majority but the British Government. The inference of the Monckton Report was clear. If a majority of citizens of a territory decide that remaining in the Federation has become untenable, then that territory ought to have the right to leave. The nature of this majority

would not, as Welensky and so many others had sought to insist, be the narrowly representative electorate, but all who had a voice, and could raise it.

Welensky's voice in the midst of it all, of course, pealed betrayal, and he was right. The Monckton Commission had entirely exceeded its terms of reference and underlining this was a more bitter betrayal still. Time and time again Welensky had been assured that Her Majesty stood squarely behind the survival of the Federation. She would under no circumstances do anything to in any way undermine the future of her subjects. Clearly not so. *Drum* magazine cruelly lampooned Welensky's predicament in the pages of the November 1960 edition:

"Roy Welensky, heavyweight champion of the rough-neck Rhodesia of the 1920s, has just been knocked groggy by a blow harder and more painful than any punishment he ever took in the ring. And Welensky, who swapped his fighter's gown for the striped pants of the Prime Minister's office – and held onto the title of Central Africa's 'White Hope' – is making the same cry as every fighter who ever got licked and didn't like it: 'Throw out the ref.'"

One wonders whether the poison chalice handed to Welensky tasted any worse than it did to the handful of British politicians whose job it was to bring the curtain down on the British Empire. None of them much liked the taste of British defeat, and never again would Britain stand proudly in this region. Never again would the sun-scarred men in khaki ever feel their Britishness without a hint of revulsion. The men of character and stature like Rhodes, Smuts, Huggins and Welensky seemed to have given way to a bevvy of vacillating yes-men, and this was indeed the end.

The band, of course, marched on for a few more choruses. In his memoirs, Sir Roy Welensky tried with good grace to plough through the galling details, but it was an awful moment, perhaps the worst of his career, and his life. Nyasaland had always been something of a liability, he wrote, and the union was in many ways better off without her, but he knew, and everyone knew, that this was the beginning of the end. Symbolism overtook practical politics, and with Nyasaland now feverishly negotiating its secession and independence, there seemed no reason to suppose that Northern Rhodesia would not to do the same.

The next step in the political process, however, was the long-awaited Constitutional Review Conference. This was held at Lancaster

House in London, the funeral parlour of the British Empire, on 5 December 1960. By then, of course, the die was cast. A new constitution for Nyasaland had already been agreed, and Banda had already succeeded in securing a black majority in the legislature. His objective at the conference was to smash the Federation, and rarely did he miss an opportunity to say so. Thus, a sense of hopelessness settled on all the white delegates, as they glumly waded through the whole turgid performance.

As was his wont, however, Banda enlivened matters by carefully choreographing a headline catcher. The idea was simply that he would walk out of the conference chamber with his entire delegation at the optimum moment. The chairman frustrated this plan, however, by carefully steering the proceedings away from any potentially provocative areas. With a press conference already arranged, Banda was forced in the end to throw his papers arbitrarily in the air and shout "To hell with the Federation!", after which he gathered his entourage together and hurried off to meet the press.

The incident was more comic than dramatic, but no one was laughing. Banda was not supposed to be a comedian but a national leader who must be taken seriously. Clifford Dupont, who observed the incident, related the story in his memoirs but was careful to add that he had always regarded Banda as the wisest and bravest leader of any African state. At that time these were few, and the competition was unimpressive. Banda would in due course evolve into the closest thing Rhodesian whites had to a friend in the region, and his sensibilities needed to be protected. Dupont perhaps revealed more than he intended when he added the comment: "I will not embarrass him with any details beyond stating that I value his friendship."

By then the Conference had degenerated into a farce, and it broke up after twelve-days having achieved almost nothing. The imbalance created by Nyasaland's new status demanded constitutional reviews on the part of the two remaining territories, and it was with some relief that the delegates parted company and set off in their various directions to undertake this.

After Hastings Banda's success, blacks in Northern Rhodesia were energised. They could sense devolution, and so could Roy Welensky. However, by then he could barely muster the energy to protest. He was forced to drink from the poisoned chalice again when Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Commonwealth, obliged him to release the remaining Nyasaland detainees still held in Southern Rhodesia. As Sir Roy

wearily warned, this would merely precipitate an immediate deterioration of the security situation in that territory, and so it did.

During these dark days, Roy Welensky more than once considered a unilateral declaration of independence. Anticipating something along these lines, Harold Macmillan placed a British air and ground force on standby at Nairobi Airport. Welensky, of course, was alerted to this, and although hoarse from shouting, he raised his voice again. Macmillan faced a right-wing backlash and was forced into some infantile back-peddling. The force was promptly withdrawn, and the episode, in the end, did the Prime Minister very little credit.

In July 1961, in the meanwhile, after interminable wrangling, the rough outline of a new Northern Rhodesian constitution was made public. It appeared, however, to concede more to the white community of the territory than seemed justified by their numbers, and even more so in Nyasaland, bearing mind what banda walked away with. The no less ambitious Kenneth Kaunda would settle for no less, and incidents of sabotage, arson and violence soon engulfed the protectorate. This uprising, in the unique style of Kenneth Kaunda, was codenamed the ‘Cha-cha-cha Campaign’.

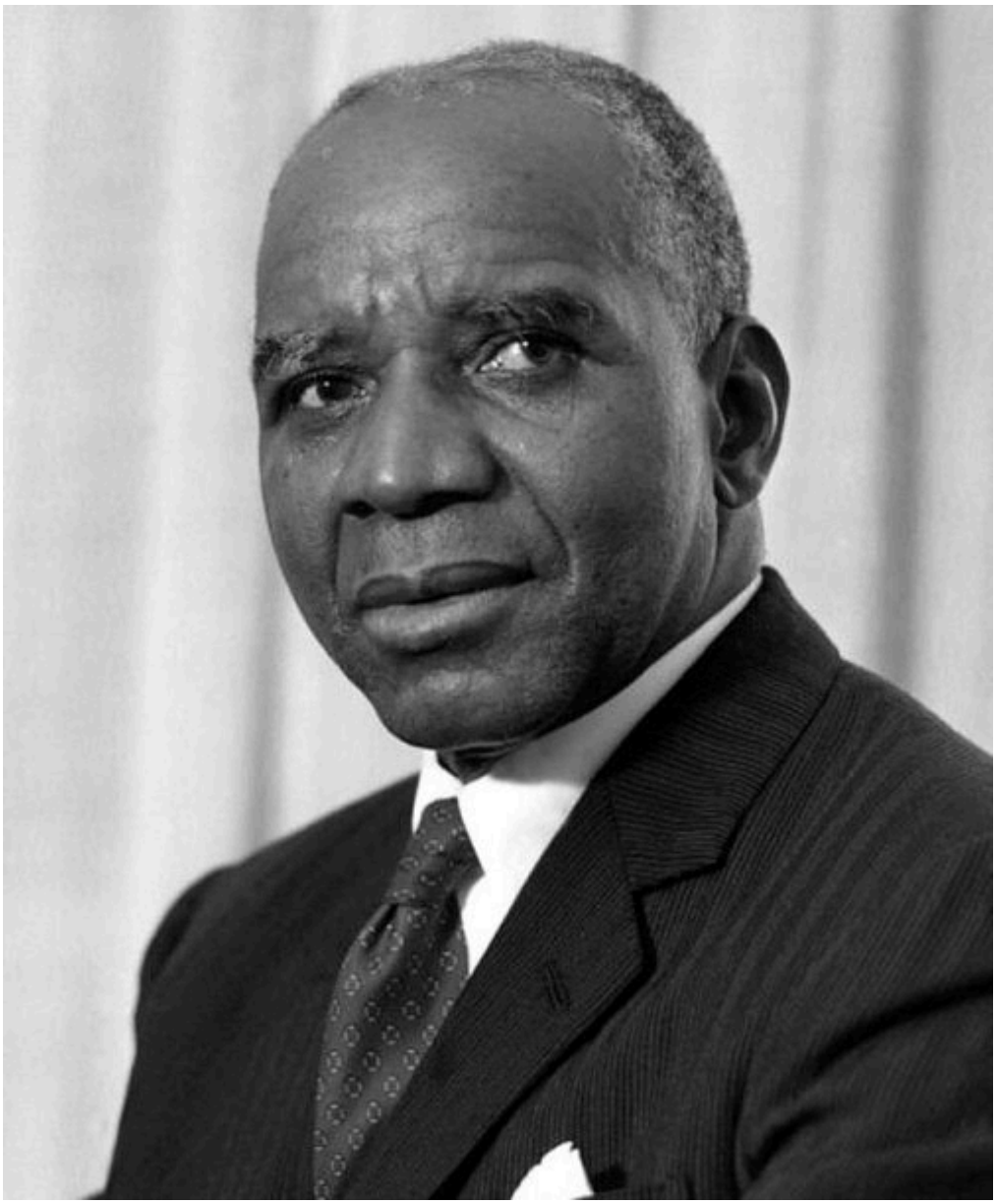
Kenneth Kaunda by then enjoyed complete dominance of the Zambia African National Congress, which was banned in March 1959 after a bout of civil unrest. This, of course, simply burnished its credentials, as did Kaunda’s June 1960 arrest and imprisonment. On his release in 1960, however, he formed and was elected President of the United Independence Party (UNIP). By February 1962, another constitutional formula had been devised that was more to his taste. The nationalists were almost guaranteed a majority in the legislature, and a commanding black majority was indeed the result of the general election held in October 1962. Kenneth Kaunda and Harry Nkumbula, leader of the banned ANC, formed an uneasy coalition government with the aim of breaking away from the Federation and formulating a one-man-one-vote constitution.

Back in Nyasaland, in the meanwhile, the sequence of events from that moment on was rather predictable. Everything that Roy Welensky and many others prophesied would happen did indeed happen, and there was ample occasion in the months and years to follow to say ‘we told you so’, if indeed anyone was listening, or cared. ‘One man one vote once’ was the typically disgruntled note of white commentary, and in Banda’s case at least, he made no effort to deny it. He took office as Prime Minister of an

independent Malawi on 1 February 1963, and President in 1966, when Malawi was declared a one-party state, and he the President-for-Life. In his thirty-one-years of autocratic rule over one of the world's poorest countries, Banda was reputed to have amassed over US$320 million in personal assets. After the breakup of the Soviet Union he was forced to allow multi-party elections, and in 1994 was resoundingly beaten at the polls. At the age of possibly ninety-four, nobody could entirely be sure, he finally released his grip on power, and seven years later died in a South African hospital.

Welensky, meanwhile, swam defiantly against the international tide by supporting Moise Tshombe during the Congo Crisis. Moise Tshombe was the secessionist leader of the breakaway Katanga Province of southern Congo, one of the world's major copper producers, and an economically allied territory to the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. The two copper producing regions were linked by the same railway system, and accusations that Welensky was attempting to draw the region into the Federation were probably not altogether inaccurate. Tshombe was the Congolese faction leader the everyone loved to hate at that moment, and in the end, the whole business was an absolute public relations disaster.

Besides that, it was a pointless effort, since the whole ship was sinking anyway. Welensky was forced in 1962 to accept the secession of Nyasaland from the Federation, and a year later Northern Rhodesia. The Central Africa Federation writhed in its death throes for a few more months and was put out of its misery by a general dissolution on 31 December 1963. After just over ten years, the grand experiment in amalgamation was at an end. The front line was now the mighty Zambezi River, and over the next two years, much political reorganisation would take place ahead of the great race war to follow.



Doctor Hastings Banda

15
The Illiberal Experiment

Not by speechifying and counting majorities are the great questions of the time to be solved, but by blood and iron – **Prince Otto von Bismarck**

We return now to events in Southern Rhodesia. Upon the dissolution of the Federation, and the creation of Zambia from the Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia became merely Rhodesia. When last we visited the territory, Garfield Todd had fallen in a palace coup, and Edgar Whitehead, somewhat to his own bewilderment, found himself the leader of the territorial government.

Sir Edgar Whitehead, emerges from the pages of Rhodesian history as rather a bungling, myopic and opinionated character. He would, without doubt, have interpreted his election to the premiership less as a reaction against Todd than an endorsement of his own qualities of leadership and political genius. Thus, without a backward glance, he took the helm of the ship and set a course. He was, however, a captain without a compass. It might even be said that the ship of state was entering the Furious Fifties, and there were better men on board than he to steer it around the Horn. The times no longer belonged to the liberal and intellectual classes of England, but to the warlords, and Sir Edgar, blinking credulously through his inch-thick spectacles, was about to have the stuffing completely blown out of him.

In the subtle weights and measures of English society, Edgar Whitehead's background was superior to Godfrey Huggins', and certainly Roy Welensky's, and in theory, he ought to have stepped in at a higher level than both. He was born in Berlin in 1905 to a father in the diplomatic service and educated at Shrewsbury and Oxford. Like Huggins, it was poor health that brought him to the colonies, and like Huggins, he suffered from hearing difficulties. His deafness, though, was much worse than Huggins', with the added disadvantage of extremely poor eyesight. He was also cursed with a bumbling, gnomish quality that was helped not in the slightest by thick spectacles that magnified his pale eyes and made him look startled. Perhaps because of his awkward looks and somewhat gruff manner he was a confirmed bachelor, but this may also have been because he could barely stand being corrected, and was seldom inclined to concede a point.

References to alcohol also tend to feature large in most memories of him, and indeed, Ian Smith, in his uniquely unforgiving way, remembered that when Whitehead had a few drinks, and usually it was more than a few, he tended to 'fumble and stumble'. Smith's favourite beverage, of course, was tea, and one can imagine that Whitehead found him equally gauche and disagreeable. Alec Douglas Home, then Leader of the House of Lords, likewise recalled that once when Whitehead visited him for a chat, he consumed thirteen bottles of beer between the hours of eight and midnight. He was in the habit of proving his self-discipline by giving up alcohol for one month of the year, and the month he usually chose was February. Rhodesian intelligence chief Ken Flower noted that Whitehead was in the habit of summoning his ministers for consultations in the small hours of the morning, only to appear drunk and incapable.

However, despite many of his colleagues and acquaintances shaking their heads in wonder, Whitehead was the man at the helm of government. Hardwicke Holderness, from whom a positive spin could always be expected, made the point that Whitehead's previous job in the ministry of finance suited him far better. "It enabled him to make full use of his talent for statistical and economic analysis without having to worry about the more illogical aspects of politics concerned with people and their susceptibilities."

Holderness then went on to surmise quite correctly that Whitehead's relationship with blacks stretched no further than his farm labour and domestic servants. He was out of step with the times and innocent of the trauma to blacks that his ouster of Todd had caused. Blundering into the role of race arbitrator, his confidence was enormous but based on nothing but the most superficial understanding of the task ahead. He was the enemy of Todd, so he was the enemy of the black race, and he had nothing with which to counter this view because he had no idea that it existed. With his anchor sunk deep in the British establishment, he shared no common ground whatsoever with the black political elite of Rhodesia.

Beyond that, and by way of a brief biography, Edgar Whitehead was somewhat isolated, and at the very least eccentric. From 1930 onwards he farmed on a reasonably large scale in the Vumba area outside Umtali and lived alone in a large farmhouse remembered for its haphazard arrangements and generally poor state of organisation. His political career began with the Umtali North seat for the United Party, which he won in the

1939 election. Shortly after that, he left the territory to serve abroad for the duration of the war, returning in 1945 with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Then he was appointed High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia in London before his recall to Rhodesia to serve as Minister of Finance in Huggins' Cabinet. He was instrumental in the railway purchase and was one of the principal architects of the Federation. However, Federal Minister of Education, a wealthy Jewish lawyer by the name of Bennie Goldberg, expressed the majority view when he remarked: "In the final analysis, if we have to choose between Todd and a donkey, then it's the donkey!"

If Whitehead sought in any way to dispel these negative perspectives on his premiership, then he failed. His first priority was to win a parliamentary seat, which he did not have at that time. In any British parliamentary system, a cabinet minister or premier must also be a member of parliament. Whitehead ought by dint of his home base in Umtali, and thanks to the fact that it was a safe seat, have contested that constituency, but he did not. He chose instead to challenge a vacancy in the Bulawayo constituency of Hillside. A by-election was duly held, and to his horror, Whitehead was defeated by a no-name Dominion Party candidate. He now found himself in the embarrassing position of having to call a general election, the date for which was duly fixed for 5 June 1958.

In another rather foolish decision, Whitehead included Garfield Todd in his first cabinet, which one or two pundits have suggested was the reason behind his unexpected defeat in Matabeleland. As probably the last man in the country to do so, Whitehead finally acknowledged that Todd was a liability, and let him go. In all likelihood, Todd welcomed his dismissal, after which he entered into a second career as the multiracial champion in an area of local politics. This, of course, offered him neither voice nor public forum, and from then he existed, along with his diminishing army of liberals, as a celebration of the possibility of multiracialism, if never the objective fact.

However, his allies, as few as they were, did indeed gather around him, and principal among them was Hardwicke Holderness and his legal partner Pat Lewis. Together the three men proposed reinvigorating the old United Rhodesia Party to fight the upcoming general election on an open and liberal race agenda. Holderness had come in on the seventh session as the United Federal Party member for Salisbury North, which was, incidentally, Godfrey Huggins' old parliamentary seat. This was also the

seat that Whitehead, now exercising extreme caution, selected for himself, but being obviously unable to afford the possibility of another defeat, he made certain that he ran with the ageing Lord Malvern's public endorsement.

Leading this new pack of liberals was, of course, Garfield Todd, while surrounding him were one or two other high profile liberals. These included Holderness and Lewis, John Moffat, the son of the ex-Prime Minister Howard Moffat, Alan Henderson, son of the Matabele Rebellion hero Ian Henderson and most importantly, from a financial point of view, Sir Stephen Courtauld. Such an august gathering of liberals had never been seen before in a single club, but as a figurehead, Todd appeared somewhat the martyr tossing the last of his reputation to the judgement of the synod. Prominent in the new party's manifesto were these clear words of truth:

> Africans are becoming part of the machinery of the modern state which Europeans have established here, and from time to time the old legislation has to be changed to give them some voice and responsibility in its affairs. If the change is made in time, their desire for cooperation and partnership will be retained. If not, they will be forced to become racialist and hostile, and eventually a seedbed for communism.

As campaigning progressed, Holderness appeared initially to be advancing steadily in a constituency that he both knew well and had served conscientiously. He might only perhaps be criticised for being a little too determined to push his message of multiracialism down the throats of his constituents. Whitehead, in the meanwhile, thoroughly alarmed by reports that he was trailing in the safest seat that he could have chosen, thought it prudent to publish a photograph not of himself on his campaign pamphlets, but one of Huggins, who had fallen so like oil on troubled water in years gone by – and it worked.

Holderness lost Salisbury North to Whitehead, and the new United Rhodesia Party proved itself stillborn by winning not a single parliamentary seat. With it died the active political careers of most of its principal members, and the last shred of political liberalism in Rhodesia. White Rhodesia then swung conspicuously to the right, and the political realists, now so discredited, were each shown the door. The result was seventeen

seats to Whitehead and the United Federal Party and thirteen to the Dominion Party. It was less than Whitehead hoped for, but it was enough.

And, of course, although hardly embittered, Hardwick Holderness memoirs betray a weary resignation. “Whatever hope there might have been of white Rhodesians finding common political ground with Rhodesian blacks ceased to exist on 5 June 1958.”

About this, there could be no doubt. As the Federation crumbled before everyone’s eyes, and as British Africa fell like a line of dominoes, the white bastions of the south girded themselves for the fight. Rapprochement was truly dead, and no one who was above desperate patriotism believed that bloodshed could now be avoided.

16
The Authentic Voice of the People

Our party must continue to strike fear in the heart of the white man, our real enemy! Robert Mugabe

Whitehead approached his term of office determined to succeed where Todd had failed. He believed that Todd had somehow forgotten the simple truism that liberalism in Africa did not mean advancing the interests of blacks as much as addressing their fears. Nonetheless, he found himself heir to the same old problem, but now with conditions on the ground so much more complicated than they had been under Todd. Adopting the maxim of 'talk softly but carry a big stick', circumstances happened to be such that he was forced to wield the big stick long before he was given the opportunity to talk softly, and by then it was likely that no one was listening anyway.

The first sign of the big stick came in February 1959, during the disturbances in Nyasaland, when Whitehead declared a pre-emptive state of emergency in order to crack down on the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress. This was an action taken in concert with a broader, Federation-wide roundup and detention of the various ANC leadership committees. The Southern Rhodesian ANC had not yet committed any act that would warrant this response, but the activities of the Nyasaland ANC and a general widening of the outreach of the local organisation was enough of a concern to prompt action. The effect, however, was to stifle another avenue of black expression in Southern Rhodesia while doing nothing to quell the spirit of revolt.

An interesting side effect of the February clampdown was that it exposed a schism in the leadership of the ANC that offered a hint of turmoil to come. Joshua Nkomo was the leader of the movement and regarded by many whites as the authentic voice of the majority. However, his colleagues in the nationalist leadership at times viewed him with both caution and suspicion. Nkomo's reputation had developed along a track not dissimilar to Todd's, inasmuch as his stance was moderate while his style of leadership betrayed autocratic tendencies. But unlike Todd, Nkomo was also from time to time criticised for being rather too preoccupied with the material advantages of his position. His corruptibility and willingness to rub shoulders with white politicians had damaged him and would hurt him

again. Most injurious was the fact that Nkomo always seemed to be out of harm's way when such incidents as the February 1959 clampdown were taking place.

On this particular occasion, Nkomo was out of the country attending the All-African Peoples Conference in Accra, where both he and Banda made their international debuts. Nkomo lingered in Accra longer than was necessary, before travelling on to Egypt. There he was persuaded, as he explained it, by Egyptian 'friends' to resist his natural impulse to return to detention in Southern Rhodesia in support of his colleagues, but instead to travel on to London to open an external office of the ANC. Without a doubt, 'friends' at home would have counselled him differently, but he found Britain much more attractive than a detention camp in Matabeleland. It was inevitable that one day he would be forced to face the whirlwind, as every revolutionary must, but just not quite then.

Nomo's first visit overseas also answered a question that had fascinated him since he was a boy. Based on his experience in Rhodesia and South Africa, he had often wondered who did the work in England. The answer was revealed when a white maid, who called him 'Sir', attended to him in his hotel. This was as gratifying to Nkomo as discovering that he could apply for the dole as a Commonwealth migrant. This he promptly did, although he later claimed in his autobiography that he found living off the British taxpayer demeaning. The Egyptian Government had already donated a substantial sum for his personal expenses, and in fact, he continued to live for some time on contributions and gifts from various sources. These, in combination, allowed him to buy a car, and among other luxuries, to educate his children overseas.

None of this withstanding, Joshua Nkomo was an authentic nationalist and a motivated cadre who made real progress on behalf of the movement in London. For a novice, his list of international supporters and benefactors was impressive, included among which was Labour MP and chairman of the National Executive Committee Ian Mikardo and future Labour member for Eton and Slough Baroness Lestor of Eccles. He was also, of course, well received by the Anti-Slavery Society and the Fabian movement, and in many homes and forums linked to the Socialists and the British Labour Party. Detention in Southern Rhodesia and even just the grubby day-to-day struggle of activism in the townships and reserves must have seemed very distant and unappealing. While he raised his fist and

talked the talk, he nonetheless displayed no particular enthusiasm to return to the trenches.

1960, however, would prove to be an eventful year for everybody, at home and abroad, thanks mainly to the formation of a new political party to supersede the banned Southern Rhodesia ANC. Since Joshua Nkomo was still overseas, and the other central leadership figures were languishing in detention, control of the newly minted National Democratic Party fell to a modest trade unionist turned nationalist by the name of Michael Mawema. The event was celebrated in the July issue of *Drum* in characteristic style. "Congress is dead – long live the National Democratic Party!" Ran the headline. "That is the cry ringing around the locations, townships and reserves of Southern Rhodesia. The Party's rallying call? The same one that is sweeping Africa from Cairo to the Cape, the catch-phrase that is turning Africa upside down and inside out: One man, one vote!"

Meanwhile, the blood of black Rhodesian nationalists continued to be stirred and heated by events occurring elsewhere in southern Africa. Towards the end of 1959, the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa staged a national protest against local pass laws, openly defying these laws as a large number of arrests were made. The process was mainly peaceful except in the Transvaal township of Sharpeville where police opened fire on a group of demonstrators surrounding a police station. When the dust settled, sixty-nine people lay dead and more than twice that number wounded. Later that same day, on hearing the news, a large crowd of PAC supporters in the Langa township of Cape Town responded by rampaging through the district and attacking police. Police again opened fire, and a further three people were killed and forty injured.

This iconic chapter in the South African revolution sent an unexpected message north. On the one hand, political agitation seemed to be achieving spectacular results in seeing off a British government that was in any case anxious to leave, but on the other hand, it appeared to simply entrench the resistance of a white minority determined to stay. Southern Rhodesian blacks were buoyed by optimism and preferred to believe, contrary to the facts, that their future would reflect that of their Federal partners. Revolution was in the air, and an energised black population was anxious to test the waters. However, many among them were moderates and intellectuals, and these, supported by *Drum* magazine, sounded a more cautionary note.

> The NDP is not so starry-eyed as to believe that it can deliver independence to the Blacks of the colony in five minutes, or even in five years. Unlike the two territories in the north, and unlike the Federal Parliament itself, no black man has ever stood for – let alone won – a seat in the Southern Rhodesian Assembly. It may take ten years, maybe fifteen, to get into power. We're ready to sweat out our period in the wilderness.

The leadership of the party and the black media may have tended towards the pragmatic, but their grassroots supporters and the broader urban population did not. On 19 July 1960, the 'March of the 7,000' took place in Salisbury. It began as a minor demonstration in the Highfield Township, but from there, marchers made their way in growing numbers to the city, where it was vaguely intended that they would demand a meeting with Whitehead. However, progress was halted in the early hours by a police cordon surrounding Stoddart Hall in the black township of Harare. The crowd was addressed by a white police detail who informed them that Whitehead would address them at that location later in the day.

Upon receiving this news, some dispersed while the majority settled in to wait. As word spread, however, a crowd began to form, until by mid-morning upwards of 40,000 people were assembled in the vicinity of Stoddart Hall. Among them was a thirty-six-year-old Robert Mugabe, recently returned on leave from Ghana were he was employed on contract as an expatriate primary school teacher. At that point, he was not politically active, but attending the demonstration as a 'distinguished guest' of the NDP. With him were members of the leadership, including Leopold Takawira, a close friend and chairman of the Salisbury branch of the NDP, standing in for Nkomo who was still abroad.

As a member of the small but growing elite of young and educated blacks in Southern Rhodesia, there was naturally place for Robert Mugabe at the table of nationalist leadership, should he desire it, but at that stage he did not. He was apolitical, and home in Southern Rhodesia only to present his twenty-nine-year-old Ghanaian fiancé Sally Heyfron to his mother. After that, he intended to return to his teaching post in the Ghanaian port town of Takoradi.

Whitehead, in the meanwhile, was pacing his office in a state of nervous agitation. He had no intention of facing either a mob or a

delegation. This was the sort of job that Huggins would have handled with aplomb or Todd with sensitivity, but for him, it was altogether too much. His response instead was to call up a territorial battalion to protect essential points of the city, and otherwise to deploy the police in a show of force. Information to this effect was broadcast on the radio along with a sweeping ban on public meetings in any of the Salisbury townships. The crowds already gathered in Harare Township received this news with disquiet, hardly failing to notice a build up in the numbers of security personnel at the scene. This continued throughout the day until by early afternoon Stoddart Hall was entirely surrounded by detachments of armed police supported by dogs. The crowd then fragmented into a series of political meetings with a variety of young men jostling to be heard on a number of makeshift podiums.

At this point, Mugabe was urged to speak. It was an awkward moment for him, and he was unsurprisingly reluctant. A frail-looking, rather effeminate and bookish man, there certainly was nothing prepossessing about him. However, he stood on a wooden box, and at first, his voice was weak and uncertain, discoursing vaguely about his experiences in Ghana, painting a picture of the free African society that he had found there. This, however, was a compelling theme, and he drew confidence from the crowd gathering around his podium. In due course, his oratory gathered strength and began to crystallise, and soon his listeners were mesmerised by a similar portrait painted of a future, independent, black-ruled Rhodesia. At that precise moment, a seed was planted, for as Mugabe urged all men to become part of the struggle, he realised that this call could no longer reasonably exclude himself.

Mugabe was held to the podium by an increasingly militant crowd, determined that he would remain until Whitehead appeared. Whitehead, however, did not, and at last, to his relief, his Commissioner of Police advised him that the situation had deteriorated to the point that he should not. The situation had developed from a petty labour dispute to a city-wide economic boycott. By late afternoon a spotter plane was seen circling overhead, and soon afterwards, at the command of a whistle, police and dogs moved in. The crowds were pressed back and dispersed towards their townships, but in places, barricades were erected, and running battles fought. By evening the initial disturbances had been quelled with the arrest of 130 blacks, and dozens more injured. Within an hour it was over,

although disturbances in and around the black townships of Salisbury continued for the remainder of the week.

By the weekend similar unrest had spread to other centres, the worst being Bulawayo. NDP meetings were cancelled at short notice by the courts, but too late to arrest a momentum that had been building for weeks. Frustrated demonstrators mingled with the Sunday morning crowds, and before long feelings were running high. Beer halls were drunk dry and European bottle stores besieged by thirsty and unruly demonstrators. The city centre and white areas were protected by a four-mile long cordon of police and territorials, so the demonstrators, now predominantly drunken rowdies and young opportunists, laid waste to the townships in an orgy of black on black violence. Although white territorials were called up, they were not deployed, and the disturbances were handled by the police.

Historian Peter Stiff, who was a serving member of the BSAP at this time, remembered that police handled the situation in Salisbury under strict orders not to shoot, which would have broken the BSAP record of never having fired a shot in anger in the territory since 1896. Instead, baton charges were employed which pitched riot policemen against fleet-footed black rioters who easily melted away, and extra supplies of tear gas were hastily flown in from Britain. A white policeman who found himself isolated within the mob shot and wounded a rioter in self-defence, although the commissioner of police instructed that the incident be reported as an accidental discharge. In the end, live fire was authorised, and twelve demonstrators were killed.

The ‘big stick’, in the meanwhile, was soon legalised by the introduction in 1960 of the iconic ‘Law and Order (Maintenance) Act’. This augmented earlier public order and vagrancy legislation introduced by Todd, equipping the police with formidable powers to isolate, detain and proscribe individuals and organisations deemed a threat to both public order and national security. In particular, Sections 50 and 51 conferred the power to ‘restrict’ persons on the orders of the Minister of Law and Order. This cleanly bypassed the judicial process and gave the ministry and the police almost unlimited freedom to detain agitators, troublemakers and anyone with questionable political views.

In defence of the Act, it could be said with some honesty that it was promulgated less to clamp down on political dissent than to deal with the shocking violence inflicted by blacks against blacks at that time. It did,

however, have the undeniable potential for political misemployment, and it cannot be said that this was never exploited. As with earlier legislation, such as the Land Apportionment Act, the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act had a non-discriminatory veneer based on the fact that agitation was in principal a multiracial folly, but in reality, few whites had cause to agitate. Those who felt wronged by the racial bias of the system did so only on behalf of their black brethren, and even then they usually responded with no more than a rueful shake of the head. It can be taken for granted that few whites were in danger of being netted in a dawn raid and shipped off in silence to Wha-Wha Prison.

Sir Robert Tredgold, as just one who regretted the new Act, and who as Federal Chief Justice would have been obliged to arbitrate in appeals against it, resigned in protest. “This bill outraged every basic human right”, he explained in his memoirs, “[and] it will remove the last vestige of doubt about whether Rhodesia is a police state.”

Hardly a police state, but Southern Rhodesia did undoubtedly appear to be developing an unhealthy reliance on security legislation. Whitehead and his government were apt to defend the action by reminding the likes of Tredgold that before the promised liberalisation could take place, law and order had to be assured. In fact, Edgar Whitehead was caught in a balancing act that at times was much more complicated than merely trying to beat the blacks into silence. He also had to prove to Whitehall that, despite all the fuss and bother, he did indeed have a scheme for a universally acceptable system of government that would keep that silence, and satisfy blacks once the pressure was lifted.

As with most other whites, however, Whitehead was focused almost entirely on that holy grail of independence under white minority rule. Nyasaland was beginning to negotiate independence as part of her withdrawal from the Federation, and Northern Rhodesia no doubt would do likewise. Under the terms of the Federal Constitution, white Rhodesia had every reason to anticipate the same dispensation. With the increasing irrelevance of the Federation, a series of territorial constitutional reviews would take place, and it would be during the Southern Rhodesian Constitutional Conference, to be held in Salisbury on 31 January 1961, that Whitehead hoped to strike the necessary balance. He aimed to negotiate a constitution acceptable to both the governed majority and the ruling minority. His principal constituency, of course, was white, and for a

majority of them, majority rule remained acceptable in principle, inevitable in fact but a difficult pill to swallow nonetheless. For blacks, on the other hand, the question was not if but when, and few among them were in a mood to either wait or compromise.

In fact, by then, the opportunity to find a formula for a peaceful resolution had long passed. This fact was observed and commented upon frequently by the likes of Todd, Holderness and others of the liberal clique, who were no doubt supported by others such as Sir Robert Tredgold and Huggins who, from the safety of retirement, could now afford to be frank. Whitehead was still in active service, however, and was necessarily less perspicacious. He was Prime Minister, and thus heir to the grand illusion, and he approached the constitutional conference suffering from a case of irrational optimism. As he smothered the voice of black nationalism, he made ready to roll out a new formula to silence that lobby forever.

This most recent plea for Rhodesian independence can be traced back to the birth of the Federation. Huggins believed then, with some justification, that federation was the better alternative to immediate autonomy, that also happened to be on the table at that time. This followed almost categorical assurances from Britain that in exchange for services rendered to the war effort, Southern Rhodesia could expect independence. However, for Whitehead to try and remind Britain of this promise after the breakup of the Federation was quite obviously a waste of time. In his day, Huggins had undoubtedly been aware of the risk of this but had made the calculation that federation would be a better solution *for the time being*. He hoped that it would lead to the independence, not just of Southern Rhodesia, but also of the entire Federation as one unitary nation. Choosing federation, therefore, proved in the end to be a missed opportunity, for had Huggins seized the moment when it was ripe, and ignored the temptation of a greater central African union, the history of Rhodesia may well have had a very different conclusion.

A majority of whites, however, held firm to the understanding that implicit in their decision to take part in the Federation was the condition that, in the event of its failure, Southern Rhodesia would be granted automatic independence. Independence was also widely seen as the only way for the territory to find the peace and quiet it needed to pursue incremental political reform. It is also fair to say that the reluctance of the British Government to grant independence was not seen then as a

particularly severe obstacle. Whites perceived that some easing of the more obvious constitutional restrictions against blacks would be sufficient to surmount it. Before the Constitutional Conference could take place, however, two events, both somewhat off the political radar, occurred that would increase the pressures on Edgar Whitehead, and drive Southern Rhodesia further towards the right.

At the end of October 1960, the National Democratic Party held its inaugural congress after nine months of already very active existence. The event took place at the Goodwill Centre in Salisbury's Harare Township, where 200 delegates packed an Asian and Coloured community hall. It was a hot Sunday, and the dusty street outside was packed with party faithful awaiting the outcome. Four key resolutions were passed. Firstly, the Party committed itself to a general election boycott until a system of universal suffrage was in place. Secondly, the Congress called for a constitutional review conference to be attended by *all* political parties. Thirdly, it was decided to call on the British Government to suspend the current constitution and intervene in ongoing tensions until a new constitution could be drafted, and lastly, a repeal of all restrictive and discriminatory legislation was demanded. Perhaps more importantly still, Robert Mugabe made his political debut. He arrived at the Goodwill Centre as a distinguished visitor but left as the new publicity secretary of the National Democratic Party. A less emphatic ballot took place to elect the president, and after much jostling, and a degree of uncertainty and dissatisfaction, Joshua Nkomo was returned to the leadership in absentia.

Thus Robert Mugabe was welcomed into the nationalist fold, but by no means was this welcome universal. Mugabe was then, as he consistently remained, an introverted intellectual with a cold, Machiavellian detachment. This alerted those more astute amongst the delegates to a potential for autocracy that would indeed later mature, to the benefit of the revolution perhaps, but to the detriment of a great many revolutionaries. He was the utter antithesis of the European political norm, but as incomprehensible as many whites would later find him, he was nonetheless perfectly aligned to the African political temper. Whites were still searching for that elusive black moderate to bridge the gap, while all along blacks were waiting for Mugabe.

By no means a physically impressive man, Robert Mugabe appears from old photographs to have been an awkward and angular-featured

individual with a marked weakness of the jaw. In group shots, he appears detached and slightly improbable, almost as if his image was pasted in, in a later and entirely different context. Early pictures of him on a makeshift podium, alone, but in complete command, and fixed in a posture of fevered oratory, are perhaps the only ones that betray a hint of his true nature. Competition for the top positions in early black political organisations was naturally intense, and at times even deadly, so during this formative phase, Mugabe remained inscrutable and aloof. As he had done since his university days, he watched, either cautious of involvement or just biding his time until the optimum moment.

Among the few who could claim access to Mugabe was Leopold Takawira. The two met in 1951 after Mugabe's graduation from Fort Hare, when Mugabe was employed as a mission school teacher. Takawira had at one time been a novice priest, but by the 1950s he was engaged almost entirely in nationalist politics. A bold man of a deeply traditional nature, he was older than Mugabe, and as a consequence tending to be more of a moderate. This was evidenced by his early involvement in the Interracial Association, and his willingness to join David Stirling as an executive officer of the Capricorn Africa Society. Along with many other young blacks, however, he would soon be radicalised and would emerge in due course as one of the founding members of the National Democratic Party.

Apart from providing friendship, Takawira was also Mugabe's first political mentor. It was he who took the raw materials of the younger man's bookish political philosophy and moulded it into a tool for practical work in the field. By this route, Mugabe found himself drawn to Marxist theory, and in due course was writing to England for copies of *Das Kapital,* Friedrich Engels' *Conditions of the Working Class in England* and *The Communist Manifesto*. He also began to attend meetings of the Interracial Association and the Capricorn Africa Society, but as usual kept to the fringes, with no more than his curiosity aroused.

To whites, Robert Mugabe gave no access whatsoever. Although always polite, he was cold, detached and even a little unfriendly. With origins steeped in the mythology of revolution, it is interesting to note that his past reveals a child deserted by his father, and with an overt and emotional dependence on his mother. Some astute historians of the period drew interesting parallels between this and the early life of Shaka Zulu, the most celebrated African dictator of the pre-colonial era. Mugabe was

frequently teased and slighted for being a small and overly serious youth, evidently weighed down by manly concerns far too early in life. Indeed, it was during a childhood of struggle and hardship that his hatred of whites began to manifest. The story is often told of a visit by the Governor, Sir Cecil Hunter-Rodwell to the Kutama Mission where Mugabe lived and was educated. Within earshot of the young student, Father Jerome O'Hea appealed to the Governor for funds to build a hospital for the mission community. “Why do you worry about a hospital?” Sir Cecil replied. “After all, there are too many natives in the country already.”

Even as an adult, Mugabe was reluctant to give any white man the benefit of the doubt. Rapprochement was a concept entirely irrelevant to a man who by then instinctively recognised that only confrontation and armed struggle would succeed. To him, the black man could and should look to none but himself for his future salvation. He was, however, a Christian, and a Catholic, and as a consequence, his early reluctance to plunge into activism had as much to do with an obvious ideological contradiction than fear or uncertainty. Despite his reading, he found the theory of Marxism and Communism incompatible with his faith. He subscribed to the principle of reversing the imbalances of history, but the ideological vehicle in common use at the time was not to his taste.

In 1955, partly to disassociate himself from demands that he join the struggle, and partly to earn more money, Mugabe left Southern Rhodesia, and for three years taught at the Chalimbana Training College outside Lusaka. There he studied in his spare time for a third degree. Then, in 1958, he was offered a teaching post at St Mary‟s Training College in the Ghanaian port town of Takoradi. There he was astonished by what he saw taking place. To a man brought up under an invisible ceiling, it was a wonder to see blacks in controlling positions in government, the civil service, the military and the private sector. In fact, it was an epiphany, the moment indeed when it truly came home to him that such a thing was possible in Southern Rhodesia.

In May 1960, he took advantage of the generous expatriate leave conditions offered by the Ghanaian Government and returned to Salisbury with his future bride. By then the lessons of Ghana had been learned to varying degrees by all the natives of the continent. Interracial experiments had been filed away as failures, and a new mood of confrontation on both sides was taking root. The NDP was four months old, and still under interim

leadership. Nkomo would not return to the territory until November of that year, and the party mood was vigorous, aggressive and spoiling for a fight.

Joshua Nomo's eventual return – only, it must be said, after stern entreaties from other members of the leadership – was the second crucial event of 1960 that would influence the progress of the struggle. The occasion did not achieve much national publicity, although it was nonetheless acutely observed. Nkomo reappeared fifty-pounds heavier, and somewhat more educated, and ebullient after months of being feted and entertained. It was therefore with some unwarranted confidence that he accepted the extremely delicate mandate to represent the NDP at the forthcoming constitutional review conference. This would be the first major diplomatic tournament of his career, and it would put all of his newfound sophistication to the test.

Chosen to chair the much-anticipated Southern Rhodesia Constitutional Conference was fifty-three-year-old Duncan Sandys, the new British Commonwealth Relations Secretary. A charming, erudite and accomplished politician, Sandys was a product of Eton and Oxford, and in every respect a member of the Conservative political establishment. He had a reputation for political sorcery, however, which to his friends implied that he was shrewd, but to his enemies that he was slippery, and not altogether to be trusted.

These, were skills, however, in whatever way they were manifest, that would serve him well in this delicate and difficult negotiation. Edgar Whitehead, for example, from the very onset, proved to be a challenge. His opening demand was that the National Democratic Party be excluded from the conference, which was rather an odd point since the NDP had yet to be banned, as was at that moment still a legitimate political party under the law, and an all-party conference could hardly proceed with it. Sandys, of course, eventually talked the Prime Minister out of it, and space was duly made for the NDP around the table.

The NDP was represented by its leader, Joshua Nkomo, but also by Herbert Chitepo, a highly respected local advocate, and Ndabaningi Sithole, Financial Secretary. It seems that Whitehead accepted their presence only reluctantly, but was then pleasantly surprised. This, after all, was his first substantive encounter with 'civilised' black men, and far from tossing bones and beating drums, he found the three men of education, intelligence and humour.

Sandys chaired the meeting with exemplary skill and did indeed achieve the impossible. Nkomo and his colleagues accepted the draft constitution, although, in fairness to Nkomo, he made it clear that his acceptance was conditional, and not absolute. There were also a few mild histrionics. The three nationalists staged a brief walkout, for example, but the conference eventually concluded with Nkomo stating his willingness to give the new constitution a chance. The NDP closing statement read, in part, thus:

> We could not be party to the franchise as it stands. This leaves us with the issue of franchise still as the greatest field of political operation. It is a subject for political pressure. But although we did not approve of the franchise, the attitude we adopted was not to impede or encourage the introduction of these proposals. The onus is on the UFP to prove the truth of its intentions in the implementation of these proposals.

Although a victory for Duncan Sandys, it came at a price. In exchange for relinquishing almost all her reserve powers, Her Majesty's was prepared to accept simple, verbal undertakings that discriminatory practices would cease and a 'Declaration of Rights' added to the Constitution. Regarding the franchise, the common roll was split in two with a complicated set of procedures designed to increase black representation without permitting an overall majority. This was achieved by enlarging the legislature from thirty to sixty-five seats and introducing 'A' and 'B' voters rolls. Qualifications for the 'B' roll would be similar to those in the existing special vote. The two rolls would exist in a relationship of reciprocal devaluation ensuring that 'B' roll votes never exceeded twenty-five per cent of 'A' roll returns.

Hardly was the ink dry, however, that the whole thing blew up in Nkomo's hands. The backlash within the party was immediate and severe, and he was horrified. Takawira contacted him by telegram from London and dressed him down without mincing words.

> We totally reject Southern Rhodesian constitutional agreement as treacherous to future three million blacks. Agreement diabolical and disastrous. Outside world shocked by NDP docile agreement. We have lost sympathy of friends and supporters. We have undermined

> Northern Rhodesia constitutional conference. Unless you take firm stand in Sunday council meeting, future means untold suffering and toil. Pray you denounce uncompromisingly and reject unreservedly conference agreement. Demand immediate reversal of present position. Future of three million Africans depends on immediate action.

These were stinging words, and Nkomo was stung indeed. Realising that his position was indefensible, however, he climbed down, and within a week of the conference, the NDP executive overturned the endorsement. Abroad, it was Takawira who led the chorus, but at home, it was Mugabe. For some time, affairs within the party executive remained turbulent, and after a great many scenes and histrionics, Nkomo was eventually backed into a corner. During one particular meeting, as Nkomo fought on a number fronts, Mugabe suddenly launched an attack. In full view of the executive, Nkomo was surgically harangued and utterly belittled – he, the great-grandson of Lobengula's chief rainmaker, husband to the granddaughter of his chief councillor. When he could take no more, he stood up and left the conference, muttering dark threats about unspecified action. It is doubtful that he ever forgave Mugabe, Takawira or himself, and certainly, he never forgot.

In the meanwhile, he flew to London to confront Takawira. No record of what transpired as survived, but within a fortnight Nkomo was back, and to the press, he remarked simply: "A leader is he who expresses the wishes of his followers; no sane leader can disregard the voice of his people and his supporters."

And that was that, although it might perhaps be useful to point out that there was another highly influential voice in the chorus, a soloist in fact. Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda all had their say, but it was Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika who wielded the big stick. These were the so-named Frontline States, and Nyerere was the doyen. He told Nkomo in no uncertain terms to retract his position, and Nkomo listened. As far as the outside world was concerned, the party held ranks and kept order. As *Drum* reported in April 1961: "It has been suggested by some Europeans, and also by some Africans, that 'Nkomo is on the way out'. It appears to be wishful thinking. The boat may have rocked slightly, but no one was thrown out."

And with those thoughtful words in mind, everything gradually settled down. The unfortunate detail, however, of Joshua Nkomo's signature

on the draft constitution remained. Certainly, Duncan Sandys, who had snatched the prize by the narrowest of margins, had no intention of giving it back, so it remained in effect. It did, of course, require endorsement by referendum, and theoretically, it could be rejected if enough black could be mobilised to vote. As the NDP executive met in closed session to considered its position, Duncan Sandys held his breath. A few days later, a press release confirmed that the Party would boycott the referendum, and Sandys breathed a deep sigh of relief.

A week or two later, the white community voted the constitution into law, and that too was that. No one was more gratified than Sir Edgar Whitehead, who was probably as bewildered as Nkomo at the sequence of events, but nonetheless, he watched with pleasant satisfaction as the Imperial Government stepped into line, and the 1961 Constitution was duly voted into law. Now he was able simply to shrug his shoulders, and say of black resistance that at least he tried his best. From the nationalist standpoint, it had been a dilettante opening performance, and no one came out of it smelling like roses, but lessons were learned, and the organisation moved on.

The ball was now in Edgar Whitehead's court, and at last, he could put the stick away and get to work with the carrot. Although he already had a strategy prepared, he kept his cards close to his chest throughout the conference until he was confident the constitution would be ratified. Then, with as much independence as Rhodesia could reasonably hope for, he set about the task of winning the hearts and minds of potential black voters. By the next election, he expected to have established a firm base of black support, after which he would determine how wisely they had used their vote. The campaign was to be called 'Build a Nation and Claim a Vote', or simply 'Build A Nation'. This was effectively a clarion call to the black middle classes to join hands with Whitehead to crush radical fringe nationalism to the benefit of all. In return, they could expect a process of gradual indigenisation, and majority rule sometime in the future.

It is a perennial truism that stable democracy is built on the middle classes, and it was this that underwrote Whitehead's strategy. He seemed, however, serenely unaware that a black middle class simply did not exist in Rhodesia. Even had there been one, that he could sincerely have imagined that an appeal by an obtuse British liberal such as him could seduce them away from their own leaders was almost too absurd to believe. But he went

ahead regardless, imbued with fantastic confidence, and his success or failure remained to be seen.

Sir Edgar Whitehead

17
The First and Last Rhodesian

Rhodesia did not want to seize independence from Britain. It was forced upon us – **Ian Douglas Smith**

As the 1961 Constitution was making its way through its various parliamentary vetting processes, the United Federal Party met in a special preparatory congress to discuss the constitution. Present was the current Chief Whip of the party, forty-one-year-old Ian Douglas Smith, and it was he alone who raised his hand to query the absence of an independence clause.

This was Ian Smith through and through. In politics, he was an enigma, a bloodhound, an unrelenting, detail-conscious prophet of the black and white. It was in his nature to sniff out a strain of improper detail in some political statement or other, seize upon it and then wring from it the last drop of its hidden perfidy. Such was the case with his understanding that Rhodesia was to be granted independence on the failure of the Federation. This was an article of faith, understood between the parties since the first enlistment of Rhodesian manpower in the imperial war effort, and now Ian Smith decided that it would be he who reminded the Crown of its obligation.

None of the lessons of the last few months, however, had been lost on Smith. He understood why this apparently minor detail had been omitted, but he also realised that slapping his forehead, as Sir Roy Welensky had done, and uttering ever more shrill appeals to Her Majesty's Government was a waste of time. The only way forward now was to pick a fight with the British Government and see who came out on top.

Thus, Smith began to stir the pot, and give voice to changes that were taking place in white Rhodesia. It did not concern him in particular that Nyasaland was slipping out of the Federal family, and nor was he aggrieved at the loss of Northern Rhodesia, but to lose Southern Rhodesia in a moment of complacency would have been a catastrophe. And as he made it his business to protest, he was gratified to discover that he was not alone. There were quite a number of others who shared his disquiet at Edgar Whitehead's reckless experimentation with their future.

Smith, however, like Robert Mugabe, was neither qualified nor politically mature enough at that moment to seize the crown. He was a son of the soil, a club man, a sportsman, a fighter pilot and a Christian parent, but politically he was a novice. For the time being, he needed a more established figurehead to lead the charge. In the first instance, he sounded out Roy Welensky who, not surprisingly, demurred. Sir Roy was still technically engaged in Federal affairs, and to interfere with territorial issues would have been inappropriate. Smith, however, prodded an already bruised Welensky a little too painfully by suggesting that the moment had come for men of principle to have the courage of their convictions. Welensky responded sharply, reminding Smith that he more than most had shown the courage of his convictions, and could be accused by no-one of lacking a fair sense of the direction things were taking. Besides, the Northern Rhodesian Constitution was under debate, and that was of more immediate concern for the future of the Federation than the status of Southern Rhodesia.

Smith clearly needed to look further. Although Clifford Dupont was a farmer, he could hardly claim to have roots in the soil, and although his political views were correctly aligned, Smith found him, on the whole, a little too blithe and unpredictable. It must be remembered that Smith was not looking for a leader, but just someone who resembled a leader, and in this regard, Clifford Dupont could probably not altogether be trusted.

Winston Field was another possibility. Field, readers might recall, broke the tobacco market in 1939, and was by then a wealthy and influential tobacco farmer. He was also, however, a rather thoughtful and passive character, with a tendency to take a sweeping, abstract view of politics. He was widely respected and universally liked, but no leader of men, no revolutionary, and as such he suited Smith's purposes perfectly.

In the meanwhile, the constitution was voted upon in a referendum, and the result, unsurprisingly, was a resounding endorsement. The 'Yes' vote came in at 41,000, and the 'No' vote 21,000. The NDP, of course, boycotted the ballot, but not without some theatrics. A shadow referendum was organised and carefully choreographed. Blacks would be shown to vote just as an illustration of the power of black numbers. The 'No' vote received 370,000 against just 471 who dared to vote 'Yes'. Some township-style enforcement went into shaping this result, but in many ways that was irrelevant. A clear message was sent to both sides. White Rhodesia was on

the ropes, and there was a muscular and aggressive black opposition gathering strength in the opposite corner.

Joshua Nkomo, in the meanwhile, was due to address a mass rally at Highfield Stadium in Harare within a few days, and the mood in the city was ominous. Youth packs were patrolling the townships spoiling for a fight. Whitehead circulated a memo to the various police depots in Salisbury, urging them to exercise maximum restraint in the trying times to come. As he made his way to Salisbury from Bulawayo to attend the rally, Joshua Nkomo paused at Empandeni Mission, and there he took the time to speak with *Drum* correspondent Noel Mukono. During the interview, Nkomo held up a toothbrush that happened to be on the table between them, and went on to explain:

"I shudder whenever I see a toothbrush. Not one African among our entire three million can make a toothbrush, or even a pin. What sort of education system is that? We must scrap this system of government for a better, democratic one approved by the majority of citizens. The NDP can provide such a government. We have our plans set. We are ready."

Should Whitehead have read the toothbrush interview, his comments would no doubt have sent a ripple of amusement through the gentleman's bar of the Salisbury Club. He did not read it, however. In fact, he probably had no idea that a native press existed at all. He was busy preaching to the middle classes, peering into the fog with his inch-thick spectacles, uncertain if anyone was there at all.

A week or so later, Nkomo made his way to London to protest the constitution as it came under imperial scrutiny. Somewhat to his surprise, however, he was invited to the office of the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, and there interviewed by a mere under-secretary, Andrew Buxton Cavendish. Andrew Cavendish, incidentally, was the grandson of Victor Cavendish, who in 1923 let it be known that His Majesty's Government only acknowledged the primacy of the native races in the African colonies. Now, as the authentic representative of the natives of Southern Rhodesia, Nkomo had every reason to believe that he would be received by the British Government as the legitimate leader of that colony. Rather to his surprise, however, after the usual formalities, he was advised to accept and find a way to work within the 1961 Constitution.

Once recovered from his shock, Nkomo was given the hard-sell. Rhodesia, Cavendish explained, was a well ordered, functioning and viable

country with an economy second in the region only to South Africa. Its industrial base was growing apace under the momentum of British capital, and frankly, it was difficult to imagine any circumstance whereby Britain would sacrifice all of this only to go the way of the Belgian Congo. He did not, of course, choose quite those words, but the message was clear enough. Do not anticipate majority rule anytime soon.

Nkomo reeled as he left the Commonwealth Relations Office. On the long flight from Southern Rhodesia to London, he had pictured an interview with the Foreign Secretary, during which the terms of his own premiership would be discussed. It had not occurred to him for a moment that the British Government would endorse the constitution, but yet the here it was, direct from the horse's mouth. Like it or lump it was the essential message – but to lump it would put him and all the rest, but mainly him, right back in the trenches. Then there was the question of what the others would say. No doubt the prophets of treachery were hard at work already in the townships, and to return home under such abject conditions was more than he could bear. His heart rebelled against returning, but this time, more than any other, he absolutely had to.

A tight-lipped NDP executive committee met the following week in Highfield to be apprised of the news. The British clearly intended to let Whitehead get away with the 1961 Constitution. There was no appetite in Whitehall for a protracted fight, besides which, the precedents were hardly encouraging. The Congo was an utter disaster, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah had already engineered a de facto one-party state, and the signs were that Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were heading down the same road. The white communities of Rhodesia and South Africa would fight before that day came, and the Macmillan government had no interest in sending in British troops to take on their kith and kin. Quite frankly, there was nothing in the short term that could be done about it.

Mugabe listened to the news in silence. In a way, it played neatly into his hands. While Nkomo seemed prepared to accept the situation and ride out the storm as titular head of the party, Mugabe laid out plans for an immediate campaign of violence. The British, he told his colleagues, needed to be made aware of the fact that their economic interests would be better served by a freely elected black government than a nation in open revolt. If economic development in Southern Rhodesia was an obstacle to black rule, then blacks would simply bring that development to a halt. If the

British government was wary of white violence, then black violence would be delivered on a scale that they would be unable to ignore.

The instrument of party violence was the NDP Youth Wing. This was Mugabe's private creation, a well-oiled enforcement arm that would bring the message home once and for all. As a school teacher, shaping the susceptibilities of teenagers in an environment of general discontent could hardly have been difficult. Mugabe was an organisational genius, and from a motley corps of youth, young unemployed delinquents and sundry gang enforcers he created the storm troopers of the revolution. Carefully instructed by both he and his aide-de-camp, Simon Muzenda, the militant youth were sent out into the field to stage a demonstration of force.

The Party line was an amalgam of Marxist and communist ideology, buttressed by a series of reconstructed traditions drawn from the *Chimurenga*, known to the whites as the Mashona Rebellion. This, in turn, was supported by a general revision of history, reflecting white glory as tyranny, and black defeat as martyrdom. A study of Shona orthography was undertaken, and Herbert Chitepo, among others, contributed an epic poem entitled *Soko risina musoro*, or 'The Tale Without a Head'. Ndabaningi Sithole, besides his thesis on African nationalism, wrote a strongly nationalist novel entitled *maNdebele KaMzilikazi*, or 'The amaNdebele of Mzilikazi'. Influential Shona writer Solomon Muswairo produced a critically acclaimed fictional portrayal of the Nehanda legend entitled *Feso*. This particular book was judged subversive by the government and taken out of circulation for the remainder of the colonial period. It nonetheless it found favour among nationalist ideologues and others keen to institute a revival of indigenous oral tradition and was published in Britain by Oxford University Press.

This was all positive stuff, and if the base ideology was Marxist, it certainly was not particularly well-formed. As an opposing ideology to imperialism, it naturally found favour in the anti-imperialist struggle, but it is doubtful beyond its utility in disturbing whites that it was deployed with much commitment. The likes of Julius Nyerere espoused an ideal of 'African Socialism', which was a reflective view of traditional African life as a kind of indigenous communism. This was part of a popular, and somewhat utopian view of pre-colonial and pre-slavery Africa that inspired a great many grassroots revolutionaries, enraged at the stripping not only of their economic but also their cultural viability.

There was, of course, a darker and more persuasive side to the Youth Wing. Political enforcement in the African context is never a pretty picture, and unadulterated thuggery tended to characterise most of its operations. An early youth leader, Rugare Gumbo, in his report to the executive of a particular night's work, adequately illustrated this. The specific mission was the 're-education' of black small business owners in Fort Victoria, who had decided to join the 'Build a Nation' campaign. Most advertised their involvement by displaying government posters in their cars, buses, shops and workshops.

> We started working at six o'clock pm.' The report ran. 'We attacked Gondo's butchery, we attacked the beer hall, we attacked everything we thought would advance our cause. For the first time we ignited a riot in the little town of Masvingo (Fort Victoria). Thus the first ever political violence in Masvingo was our work. A number of people were injured in the incident.

When the violence began, followed by a public announcement of the new NDP policy of 'positive action', Robert Mugabe became a household name overnight. He had, of course, been under police observation for some time, but now his name began to appear regularly in the press. Disinclined to hold his tongue, or curb his intemperance, Mugabe was the quintessential angry man, and he showed it. On one particular occasion, recorded by the press, he arrived at Salisbury International Airport to meet a flight, and when detained by the police, a scuffle broke out involving members of his entourage. With almost unheard of self-assurance, Mugabe waved a forefinger in a policeman's face and stated: "We are taking over this country and we will not put up with this nonsense."

A docket was immediately opened, and before long Special Branch began stocking Robert Mugabe's intelligence file with information and reports. In the meanwhile, the Youth League unleashed upon the black population of the colony an orgy of beating, arson, intimidation and assault. The white population, although aware of the uprising through the media, were shielded from the worst of its effects by the police. Mugabe's orders that white-owned stores and business were to be boycotted were heard but largely ignored. Fearsome examples were made of black collaborators and 'quislings'. Black United Federal Party members, black members of the

police or armed services and even chiefs and traditional leaders were targeted. One such example was Chief Mtoko, who in November 1961 was burned to death in his hut for being perceived to support the 'Build a Nation' campaign.

Elspeth Huxley, author of a trilogy of memoirs of life in colonial Kenya, and a member of the Bledisloe Commission wrote a letter to the British *Sunday Times* in which she lamented: "Intimidation by Congress members has been widespread and ugly, and it has not yet been eliminated. 'Join us, or we will come tonight and burn your house' is the usual form." The *Sunday Mail*, sister newspaper to the *Rhodesia Herald*, added its voice to the chorus of concern: "National Democratic Party terrorism has spread to a fantastic limit in Southern Rhodesia." The *Rhodesia Herald* itself called for action: "When will Sir Edgar Whitehead move against the thugs and hooligans who are making life unbearable for everybody who does not believe as they do?"

As he read the news every morning and reviewed his security reports, Whitehead was in despair. He was driven around Highfield on a tour of inspection keeping a waste paper basket beside him to cover his head if he was stoned. He tried hard to salvage his 'Build a Nation' campaign by portraying the violence as undirected criminal thuggery, as much of it was, but this was a hard case to sell. The NDP was wildly popular, and the European metropolitan public, in general, was hostile to the colonists and sympathetic to the African liberation movement. To the whites of Rhodesia watching it all from the sidelines, it was a terrifying glimpse into the future. Protests and demonstrations invariably turned violent, or at least that was how it seemed, and every morning the police entered the townships under arms and extracted the bodies. No one went anywhere near the townships at night.

It might all have seemed misdirected, of course, but it was not. The youth leaders were loyal to Mugabe, and while some of the violence was opportunist, most of it was orchestrated. "Today you have removed your shoes," Robert Mugabe told them, "tomorrow you may be called upon to destroy them altogether, or to perform other acts of self-denial. If European-owned industries are used to buy guns which are aimed against us, we must withdraw our labour and our custom, and destroy those industries."

One or two churches practising segregation were subject to multiracial 'kneel-ins', although in almost every case the worshipers were

invited in to pray, which they did. In November a countrywide boycott of municipal beer halls was observed, and throughout the colony, symbols of the hated Land Apportionment Act, which mostly comprised dip tanks, were attacked and destroyed.

In the meanwhile, as all of this was going on, many in the white community revealed themselves in the poorest light imaginable. On Pioneer Day 1961, for example, a nationalist demonstration interrupted the commemorative ceremony traditionally held in Cecil Square. A sit-in was staged by a group of unsmiling but otherwise well-behaved blacks. In the confusion that followed, a pioneer widow paraded herself alongside the group with a young white man beside her holding aloft a placard reading 'Join the Zimbaboon Club'.

A little later on the same day, a well-dressed white man wearing the tie of the Police Regimental Association appeared on the fringes of the sit-in and began tossing handfuls of peanuts into the congregation of seated blacks. As he did, he observed bitterly to the few whites who were watching: "Look at the monkeys. They're not really hungry. You can see they're well fed. They don't want the peanuts." A moment later a young white constable made his way towards the lonely figure, and after whispering a few words into his ear, quietly led him away.

Then came Lovemore Chimonyo and the 'Freedom Sitters', who brought some much-needed humour to the dry business of race protest. Lovemore Chimonyo was a short and slightly built man with an extravagant goatee beard who in the past sat on a whites-only public toilet and declared: "Here I sit until the law is changed." Police details who attended the incident took Chimonyo at face value, branding the toilet invasion the work of the 'Freedom Shitters'.

On another occasion, Chimonyo and his group invaded the lesser sanctum of whites-only bars. Over the course of a three-day pub crawl, he and a handful of followers attacked every bar in the white neighbourhoods of Salisbury, and with the exception of one pint of beer flung in his face, and a messy brawl in the southern suburbs, he and his friends were surprised at the generally cordial welcome they received. In one or two bars they were actually served a drink, and on a few occasions even stood a round.

The situation, however, did not turn ugly until the Freedom Sitters entered a Dutch Reformed Church in the northern suburbs of Salisbury. It

was remarked in the European press, not without a little humour, that this was probably the first time in the 300-year history of the denomination that a black man dared enter any Dutch Reform Church. There was no violence, and the police were not called, but the Freedom Sitters left unceremoniously, and in a hurry. The whole business, however, prompted a bout of frolicking journalism in the black press. *Drum* celebrated Lovemore Chimonyo's crusade thus: "Grieve not for Lovemore, friends, he can take it. A few months ago this man with a drooping beard and the bellowing voice, was the talk of the nation, celebrated as the freest of the freedom sitters. He wore his way through trouser seats as he sat his way around town."

However, the cheerful antics of Lovemore Chimonyo and the Freedom Sitters accounted less for the banning of the NDP when it came than the rampant violence occurring all over the colony. As party leader, Nkomo was frequently upstaged by Mugabe, and often forced to trim his sails and ride hard ahead of a reactionary wind. As had been long expected, on 9 December 1961 the NDP was proscribed under the Unlawful Organisations Act and its assets and funds seized. Mugabe, however, anticipated this, and long before the announcement was made the arrangements for the founding of a new party were underway. Thus, a little over a week after the banning, the Zimbabwe African People's Union came into existence, with barely a break in the stride of Positive Action.

This was a seminal moment in the revolutionary process. The Zimbabwe African Peoples Union was the first organisation of its type to make explicit use of the revolutionary name 'Zimbabwe'. The NDP was laid to rest at a minor political rally held at the Cyril Jennings hall in Highfield, and just before it was broken up by the police, Joshua Nkomo was elected to the leadership. He reappointed his executive with the addition of two new honorary members, George Nyandoro and James Chikerema, who were both still in detention following their arrests under the February 1959 State of Emergency.

In the meanwhile, there was no discernible drop in the level of violence. Attacks against black moderates, the burning down of schools and churches and the destruction of rural infrastructure continued unabated. Whitehead deployed more police and stiffened the law while over 4,000 people were held in detention under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, a record that would never be surpassed, or equalled. Strangely, Edgar Whitehead did not immediately ban the new party, but seemed willing,

perhaps because he had staked his political future on the new black vote, to give it the benefit of the doubt. However, for a further nine months, the wreckage of black-on-black violence obscured his political vision until in September 1962 he finally issued the anticipated banning order.

1962, however, proved to be a bad year for the Prime Minister. Among other things, a rumour in circulation had it that during one of his weekly security and intelligence briefings he was so distraught that he wet his pants. It was later explained that he suffered from a nervous bladder condition that was aggravated by tension. White voters were uncertain exactly what to make of it all, but the feeling was widespread that somehow Sir Edgar had lost his way.

In the meanwhile, for a second time in less than a year, nationalist assets and funds were seized, and the leadership rounded up. Special Branch, however, found it very curious that ZAPU appeared unscathed by this second round of asset seizures, and questions were asked regarding exactly where Nkomo was sourcing his funds. While his travel expenses alone amounted to a considerable sum, he was also found to have imported a brand new AMC Rambler sedan, and soon afterwards a new Vauxhall, both of which were shipped from England and paid for with cheques drawn on a London bank.

These facts kept a stew of rumours boiling, and things got even hotter when Nkomo once again just happened to be outside the country when his colleagues were rounded up and placed under restriction. On this particular occasion, he was in Lusaka on the final leg of an international trip, which, according to his own explanation, included Egypt, where he sourced arms and cash for the struggle. This was at least partially true for he was indeed given a haul of obsolete firearms, ammunition and hand grenades which he was able to carry with him as baggage on a scheduled Air France flight.

While in Lusaka, Kenneth Kaunda put it to him that he was under a moral obligation to return home to Rhodesia immediately. After all, detention and persecution were part of the usual burden of nationalist leadership and his case was no exception. Nkomo agreed, but then flinched, and drove instead to Dar es Salaam hoping that Julius Nyerere would be more sympathetic. Nyerere, however, was unimpressed, and merely confirmed the bad news that a revolutionary's place was behind bars. There was, however, still no real fire of passion for this sort of thing in Nomo's

heart, and it took a third diplomatic visit to force him to pick up his cross and trudge back up the hill. Ndabaningi Sithole, a rising star in the movement, detoured his own return to Salisbury from a conference in Athens to urge his leader to fight. The ZAPU president then tried pleading the cause of a government in exile, but this was immediately rejected by both Nyerere and Sithole, and in due course, Nkomo boarded a flight back to Rhodesia.

Back home, and under terms of restriction in the Sobukwe Reserve near Kezi, Nkomo continued to ruminate on the idea of a government in exile. The more he thought about it, the more it appealed to him. He then summoned the ZAPU executive to a meeting, which caused considerable inconvenience and danger to those breaking their own restriction orders to attend, and urged his colleagues to leave the country and join him in exile in Tanganyika. There the executive would have the freedom and support to effectively coordinate the struggle.

It was Mugabe who led the rejection, and although there were a handful of his colleagues who did not find the idea entirely atrocious, few felt it wise to say so. Nkomo might well have been the party president, but it was Mugabe, Sithole and Takawira who were the zealots. They remained committed to pursuing the struggle at home, despite the acknowledged reality that things would get a lot tougher before they got better. All three men, however, found themselves discussing Nkomo on their journey home and questioning the authenticity of his commitment to the struggle. There was nothing that could be done about it in the short term, as the leadership of the party languished under terms of restriction, but it can be taken for granted that a great deal of thought was given to Nkomo's continued leadership.

It so happened that at precisely that moment, similar questions and uncertainties were circulating in the halls of white power. Having drawn attention to the absence of any terms of independence in the new constitution, Ian Smith's parliamentary colleagues took a closer look, and discovered that he was right. Edgar Whitehead was astonished, and so was the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, and indeed, so was Roy Welensky. According to Welensky, the new constitution ought to have seen the removal of all substantive reserve clauses, preventing Britain from legislating on behalf of Southern Rhodesia without its consent. In other

words, the territory would be granted as much independence as it needed, and certainly as much as it could have hoped for.

But would Sir Roy never learn? Somewhere between agreement and drafting, the British Government slipped into the draft text an amendment so slight, and so cunning that no one noticed it until it was too late. Section 111 reserved on behalf Her Majesty 'the right to intervene by Order in Council notwithstanding anything to the contrary drafted elsewhere in the Constitution'. This was a catastrophe that for the umpteenth time brought home to Welensky and his colleagues that Britain simply could not be trusted, and did not have the best interests of white Rhodesia at heart.

This was in many respects the reverse of the news presented to Nkomo by Andrew Buxton Cavendish a week or two earlier. While black Rhodesia was not to be granted independence any time soon, neither was white Rhodesia. For the sake of world opinion, and perhaps just to keep the belligerents quiet for a while, the British Government engineered a continuation of the status quo. While all sides in the struggle, both black and white, wailed and gnashed their teeth, Ian Smith identified the point over which he would pick his fight with Britain.

In the meanwhile, the issue of the 1961 Constitution was brought under the purview of the United Nations. In the aftermath of his scalding over his handling of the negotiations, Nkomo approached the United Nations appealing for it to enforce its charter on the granting of independence to all colonial territories. To this, the British Ambassador, Sir Patrick Dean, protested. Southern Rhodesia had been self-governing since 1923, and so she alone was responsible for her internal affairs. The UN committee, however, came out in favour of Nkomo, maintaining that Southern Rhodesia was not a self-governing territory within the terms of the Charter and, was, therefore, a valid subject for discussion.

How that discussion went surprised no one. A sub-committee on Southern Rhodesia was formed, chaired by India, and including members from Mali, Tanganyika, Tunisia and Venezuela. Its role was to liaise with the British Government and monitor progress towards acceptable independence for Southern Rhodesia, as well as to 'discuss future action'. The committee sat until April 1962, and in its report, it observed that the 1961 Constitution required revision since it did not provide adequately for African representation. It also forcefully urged Britain to convene another conference to draw up a new and universally acceptable constitution. Togo,

in the meanwhile, submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly calling for the release of all political prisoners in Southern Rhodesia and the lifting of the ban on ZAPU. A formal United Nations Resolution to this general effect was passed and adopted on 12 October 1962, and it was not a pretty picture. Britain was taken to task in plain language for permitting the 1961 Constitution to become law in Southern Rhodesia, and for doing nothing to address either the question of unequal representation for blacks or majority rule.

To whites in Rhodesia this was all manifestly absurd. They pointed to the Congo, still in flames, and with panicked Belgian refugees flooding into Northern Rhodesia, and Ghana, which was already sliding towards the same symptoms of megalomania, corruption and fiscal collapse. Why on earth should a perfectly stable, well managed and prosperous colony hurl itself into the abyss merely because a brace of over-educated blacks wanted to loot and destroy it? Half of the independent African members of the United Nations were in a condition similar, if not worse, and what right did they have to wave the moral finger in the face of white Rhodesia.

Then came the rumours that Roy Welensky was planning to declare unilateral independence for the two remaining territories of the Federation. White Southern Rhodesian loyalists, led by Ian Smith, however, rejected the plan, sensing that the Federation was already a spent force, and it was high time that Southern Rhodesians began preparations for a new future. This, of course, could mean many things to many people, but one thing it meant for everyone was that Edgar Whitehead had to go. The smell of insurrection spread like blood in the water, and as Smith and his supporters began to slowly circle the beleaguered Prime Minister, Whitehead, swimming with his head barely above the waterline, had scant idea of what was underway beneath.

Robert Mugabe & Joshua Nkomo

18
A New Chapter

Smith had many fine qualities as a political leader. However, he was very much a creature of his background. His life revolved around the cricket team, the whites-only school, the RAF, the country club and the company of other gentleman farmers. He never escaped from or saw beyond it – **Peter Hain**, British Overseas Development Minister

Ian Smith cautiously made his approach to Winston Field and was gratified to find him ready and willing to lead a rebel coalition. Both then resigned their Federal commitments and dedicated their energies to building the political defences of Southern Rhodesia. If Roy Welensky managed to hold the Federation together, then good luck to him, but if he failed then an alternative refuge would be in place for him, and any other central or east African white man who wished to take it. It did not take very long for funding and support to accumulate, and as word got around, a steady stream of disgruntled federalists began to jump ship and swim over to the new alliance.

A meeting of prominent Southern Rhodesian citizens was called and widely heeded. There was a feeling of emergency in the air, and a sense that brave men had, at last, stood up. Edgar Whitehead was not present, and although he was kept appraised by Special Branch, he found himself rather distrustful even of they. The ground was shifting palpably beneath his feet, and all he could think of to do was carry on regardless.

A committee, in the meanwhile, was appointed to organise the inaugural congress of a new party where Ian Smith proposed Winston Field as the first chairman. The Rhodesian Front Party was formalised in March 1962, and it quickly built a strong following. Welensky, whose United Federal Party had been bled white by defections, held a somewhat meaningless general election for the Federal Parliament in April of that year, while in sharp contrast, the Rhodesian Front confidently prepared itself to fight its first general election in Southern Rhodesia in just a few months hence.

As all this was underway, Edgar Whitehead began to prune away dead race legislation in an effort to ferment a political breakthrough, all the while refusing to acknowledge the collapse of law and order and complete

disintegration of communication between the races. With his fingers in his ears, however, and his eyes clamped shut, he determinedly pursued the black vote despite the inevitability of a boycott. As his platform groaned, he assured a United Nations Trusteeship Committee that there would be a majority of black voters in the territory within fifteen-years. On the eve of the election, he even went so far as to promise that he would include a black member in his next cabinet.

There is, however, a sad irony to all of this, and it is that Whitehead, if only anyone would notice, had achieved a great deal, and indeed, much that Todd tried and failed to deliver. The Immorality Act, for example, was taken off the statute, and the Industrial Conciliation Act modified to allow for black trade unions. Also, any racial distinction in future wage negotiations was disallowed, public swimming facilities became multiracial, and the middle level of the civil service was at last opened up to blacks. As a pillar of his campaign, he undertook to repeal the Land Apportionment Act, which was a bold commitment to say the very least. Even he, however, could not fail to observe the general lack of interest shown by blacks in all of this, and in his 'Build a Nation' campaign. To finally comprehend that most blacks seemed to prefer the prospect of rule by a bunch of radical nationalists than by well-meaning whites was very difficult for Whitehead. He staked the white vote on a throw of the dice, hoping that he could win the black vote, but he had not, and now he had no vote at all.

On the other side of the fence, the Rhodesian Front based its campaign on the preservation of the Land Apportionment Act, which sent a strong message to both sides. Forced racial integration was rejected, as was unwarranted haste in introducing blacks to political responsibility. The grandstanding of Nkomo, Mugabe and others tended to add weight to this, and nationalist verbiage was so aggressive, so anti-white and so avowedly Marxist that it merely drove whites away. Even the likes of Hardwicke Holderness regarded the new mood with dismay, although he at least could say 'I told you so'.

The Rhodesian Front had another strong advantage too. Winston Field, with his good looks and quiet self-confidence, stood in stark contrast to the dry, bumbling and myopic Edgar Whitehead. Although Field did not entirely reject black political advancement, he certainly did not support Whitehead's meteoric pace. Whitehead was reproached for displaying

dangerous and irresponsible zeal and criticised for being too soft on law and order.

However, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Whitehead remained confident of victory, and so it was that the results of the ballot of December 1962 came as a profound shock to him. The Rhodesian Front won thirty-five seats to the United Federal Party's twenty-nine, while fourteen were won by a brave handful of black United Federal Party candidates who stood in the electoral districts. The registered black voters made up a tiny proportion of those who would have qualified to vote, and even among those, the majority abstained on the day. It was estimated that even if a mere 5,000 blacks had cast a vote, the UFP would have been victorious.

There is, therefore, a concluding irony to all of this, and it is that the opportunity existed to begin an imperfect process had the nationalists lifted the boycott. Admittedly, it would not have resulted in a black prime minister, but it would have closed the door on the Rhodesian Front. However, the net result of that failure was the entry into the political arena of Southern Rhodesia of a force that over the course of the next eighteen years would exact a cost of tens of thousands of innocent lives.

Ian Smith & British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas Home

19
A Family Divided

Each time I want to fight for African rights I use only one hand – because the other is busy trying to keep away Africans who are fighting me
– **Benjamin Burombo**

The collapse of the Federation, the rejection of partnership and the rise to power of the white right set the stage for an inevitable race conflict. Hardwicke Holderness remarked more than once in his memoir that if the moderates were marginalised, imprisoned and exiled, then who else but the radicals would be left to fight the good fight. From the moment that the Reverend Thompson Samkange assumed leadership of the Southern Rhodesian ANC, the efforts of he, and men like him, had been confounded at every turn. Each time blacks knocked on the door and asked politely to be let in, the door was bolted just a little tighter. Inevitably, however, one among them would stand up one day and kick the door down.

In the order of things, however, the war between black and white would have to wait until the blacks settled their own differences. In precisely the way that Whitehead was taken down, so would Nkomo. The days of an avuncular and comfort-loving man such he at the helm of the revolution were over. Now was the age of the warlords. This, however, ought not to imply that Nkomo was weak, or a fool, because he was neither. Admittedly, he yearned for power without bloodying his knuckles to get it, but once pushed into the ring, he never failed to give a good account of himself.

The story of Joshua Nkomo's fall from grace began at the 1961 Constitutional Conference, and it continued in August of 1962 when he summoned his executive to his place of restriction to press for a government in exile. The plan was heard by his colleagues, and rejected, and to them that was the end of the matter. Nkomo, however, continued to gnaw at the idea. It unnerved him that the mood of white politics had swung so far and so quickly to the right, and the message this sent to him was that the whites were digging in for the long haul. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was starting a life sentence, and that was a dreary prospect indeed. The whole business now promised to be much rougher than he ever imagined, and inevitably he would end up in prison too, or worse.

The idea of a government in exile was based on reasonable political logic, but he knew that it would not carry a vote of the executive. He decided, therefore, to make the claim that he had been ordered to leave the Rhodesia by Julius Nyerere and to bring his executive with him. An armed struggle was now inevitable, and that could not easily be coordinated from within. Nyerere already hosted a handful of revolutionary groups actively beginning to confront Portuguese rule in Mozambique, and Dar-es-Salaam was emerging as something of a hotbed of revolutionary politics.

Then, somewhat proving his point, Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and his wife Sally were all rearrested at the moment they were released from restriction and charged under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act. All three were arraigned and released on bail pending trial. This time Nkomo knew it would prison, and he made his pitch to his colleagues. If Julius Nyerere commanded it, then it had to be done, and so it was. With the possible exception of Mugabe, the executive and leadership of the ZAPU now welcomed the idea, for obvious reasons, and began to individually make their way in the direction of Dar-es-Salaam. Exile meant pan-African exposure, financial support and the prospect of uninhibited political activity. This was a temptation hard to resist, and probably even Mugabe saw the sense in it. Besides that, Sally Mugabe was pregnant, and if he could shield her from exposure to an increasingly aggressive political environment, he would.

Nyerere, of course, knew nothing about it, but Nkomo hoped that he would accept a fait accompli. In fact, he did, but he was nonetheless profoundly irritated, and Nkomo was summoned to Government House in Dar es Salaam and roughly dressed down. When the others heard, they were scandalised, and while one or two loyalists stuck with Nkomo, the majority rallied around the next most senior leader, who was Ndabaningi Sithole. When Kenneth Kaunda heard, he added his voice to the chorus. Both he and Nyerere argued that the abandonment of the country by almost the entire nationalist leadership would be devastating to the struggle, and they were all urged to return as soon as possible. Sides were drawn, communication collapsed, and the matter was left to fester.

In the meanwhile, they all tried to establish themselves in Dar-es-Salaam with neither money nor support. The view of the executive was not made known to Nkomo immediately, but when a written response was finally circulated some three months later, the language it contained was

revealing. The document was authored by Ndabaningi Sithole, and in part read:

> Mr Nkomo is very much afraid of going to jail, and this fear of jail causes him to evade taking the necessary decisions which any leader in his position is expected to take. The white settlers have exploited this fact to full advantage. Because of this fear, Mr Nkomo has deserted the people at the time when they most needed bold leadership and does not count the cost.

An even more bitter denunciation was reserved for the visit of a six-man ZAPU delegation to Addis Ababa to attend the inauguration of the Organisation of African Unity. It was an inauspicious début for Nkomo, and he appeared at the event under a dark cloud. Nationalists leaders from all over Africa were applauded, but not him. While no public mention was made of the matter, one august African leader after another cautioned him against disunity and urged him to return to Rhodesia forthwith to reclaim the struggle. He thereupon made a virtue out of necessity and left Dar-es-Salaam immediately before an executive meeting where he could anticipate his own termination. He was fortunate in that he did not happen to be facing charges in Rhodesia at the time, so he passed through immigration formalities at Salisbury International Airport without molestation. Once back in the townships he wasted not a moment.

And time indeed was all important. Although Prime Minister Winston Field tended to stand somewhat to the left of his cabinet, and was reluctant to make use of the sweeping security powers inherited from Whitehead, stiff new amendments to the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act were passed by Parliament as a matter of priority. These further limited black political activity, adding a mandatory death sentence for acts of sabotage. It would only be a matter of time before Nkomo would face arrest for one thing or another.

Taking full advantage of his liberty, therefore, he worked hard to discredit the rebels and promote his own version of events. On 6 July 1963, he addressed a rally in Salisbury where he publicly named eleven officials, some of whom were present, as enemies of the party. Three of these, Enos Nkala, Henry Hamadziripiri and Maurice Nyagumbo had already served prison terms ranging from two to four years, and they were justifiably

astonished to be so named. In a later press conference, Nkomo formally suspended Takawira, Sithole and Mugabe from office.

In Dar-es-Salaam, in the meanwhile, the response was no less swift and decisive. Messages of solidarity were sent to the eleven banned members pledging support, while the executive committee voted to replace Nkomo with the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole. Two important dissenters remained loyal to Nkomo. One was Jason Moyo and the other James Chikerema. Both were high ranking members, and in fact, Chikerema was head of 'Special Affairs' and directly in line for the vice-presidency of the party.

Special Affairs was the organ of the party involved with recruiting and training a military wing to wage an armed struggle. Indeed, at about that time, the police, tipped off that arms were coming into the country, intercepted a young ZAPU member by the name of Tobias Bobylock Manyonga, carrying a consignment of weapons in the trunk of his car. These were, in fact, the weapons carried from Egypt to Lusaka by Joshua Nkomo the previous year, and comprised two Lanchester sub-machine guns, a quantity of ammunition and grenades. The arms, of course, were confiscated, and Tobias Manyonga was never heard of again, but the authorities were now warned that a war was imminent.

Nkomo, in the meanwhile, issued a challenge to the rebels to return to Rhodesia and face the struggle as he had done. He knew that Sithole, Takawira and Mugabe were all facing charges, and would in all likelihood be arrested immediately. Despite this, Ndabaningi Sithole was not long in making his appearance in Salisbury, and as expected, he was arrested at the moment that he touched down. A few days later, however, he was released on bail and was then at liberty to turn his attention to the rebel agenda. Nkomo, of course, had by then hijacked the main stage, leaving Sithole to ponder his next move with neither money nor support.

To be fair, the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole was hampered less by resources than by deeply felt principles. His rise through the ranks had been steady, and thanks in some measure to his ground-breaking book, he was regarded as something of a founding father. But he was also an ordained minister, and could he really be counted among the warlords and political predators? In fact, he was gullible, nervous, fumbling at times and a regular target for press lampooning. His name was twisted with glee into such deformities as 'Rubber-dingy Shit-hole', and sometimes *'Indaba Maningi'*,

which translates from the Chilapalapa as ‘Big Trouble’. However, for the moment at least, Sithole was the anointed leader, and like it or not, his job was to face down an ebullient and trumpeting Nkomo.

Nkomo applied enormous energy to the consolidation of his position before the rebels could gather strength, and to a large extent, he succeeded. On 10 August 1963, he called a substantive party conference at the Cold Comfort Farm, a multiracial settlement situated just outside Salisbury. Although invited, Sithole did not attend. A snake symbolically representing him was killed by a mob drawn from a crowd of party faithful. To replace the now banned ZAPU executive, Nkomo formed what he called a ‘People’s Caretaker Council’, which, although not strictly a political party, would serve as a standard under which the surviving elements of ZAPU could reform and move forward. Within the new PCC was a caretaker cabinet to which Nkomo was elected life president with absolute authority.

On the same day, a handful of press and nervous supporters met outside the modest Highfield home of Enos Nkala, to hear Ndabaningi Sithole announce the formation of a breakaway party. The new organisation was to be called the ‘Zimbabwe African National Union’, or ZANU, and would be led by Sithole himself, with Robert Mugabe as general secretary. The national response to this news was at first subdued, but as it was digested, the townships and countryside of Rhodesia erupted once again into vicious, fratricidal violence. ZANU, meanwhile, wasted no time in committing itself directly to the armed struggle. Masipula Sithole, younger brother of Ndabaningi, described the aftermath of the split as a horrible and murderous affair. In a report issued by the Commissioner of Police later in the year, it was remarked: ‘In 1963 there was almost a state of civil war between supporters of rival nationalist parties in the African townships.’

The dynamics of this de facto civil war were complicated, and in no small way influenced by gang warfare and youth delinquency. There certainly was no ideological difference between the two parties that mattered a whit to the masses. The common enemy wore a different skin colour and could be easily identified, but because of an inability to come to grips with him effectively, it became all too easy for the masses to channel their anger and frustration inwards. The pages of *Drum* were clear that the mood of the nation was depressed.

“This is a civil war of sticks and stones and sneers. Old friends and neighbours are divided – and sometimes even families. Salisbury, with its

big and tribally cosmopolitan population, is worst hit – this is a city divided … the sticks crackdown and the bricks arch lazily through the air … The police move in and cart away the injured … No one wins, and the government is left with rare (sic) excuse to clamp down on nationalism."

And so it was. The war was driven by militant youth who are always to be found at the vanguard of political division. The PCC youth called themselves the 'Zhanda', an apparent corruption of the word 'gendarmes', while the ZANU youth styled themselves the Zimbabwe 1st Battalion. The native press, reflecting the dismay of a large section of the black establishment, was apt to call both the 'Highly Irregulars'.

In December 1963, Robert Mugabe, with his new son now three months old, and his wife on her way back to Ghana, set off on the return journey from Dar-es-Salaam to Salisbury. He travelled in the company of Herbert Chitepo who was to be retained as his legal counsel. Mugabe knew that he was facing severe consequences on arrival, and in this, he was not to be disappointed. The police were waiting for him, and he was arrested at the moment that he arrived back on Rhodesian soil. He was charged and remanded in custody pending trial which was set tentatively for January 1964. In keeping with his investiture into the top tier of African revolutionaries, Mugabe turned his court appearances into a political platform. Refusing to retract his subversive statements, he instead added more, including a richly worded denunciation of the 'hanging clauses' now incorporated in the Law and Order Maintenance Act. Convicted of sedition, he was duly sentenced to twenty-one months, but as he began his term, it would probably not have surprised him to know that he was not to see the proverbial light of day again for nigh on a decade.

Within three months, over 150 ZANU and ZAPU leaders, including Joshua Nkomo, joined Mugabe behind bars. Nkomo was to serve his time at the Gonakudzingwa Detention Centre, in the hot and dreary southeast of the country, while Ndabaningi Sithole joined Mugabe in Sikombela Detention Centre, southwest of Salisbury. In August 1964, ZANU joined ZAPU on the list of banned organisations. The whole business was a finely orchestrated and comprehensive security action that did indeed silence the two organisations and returned the townships and countryside to a state of relative peace.

On the other side of the country, however, what is generally regarded as the first act of war in Rhodesia took place. On the evening of 4

July 1964, Petrus Oberholtzer was driving with his family along a lonely Melsetter road when he came upon a makeshift roadblock. While his wife and three-year-old daughter remained in the family's Volkswagen Kombi, Oberholtzer stepped out and walked forward to investigate. On reaching the obstruction, he bent down, picked up a boulder and tossed it into the bush, and was astonished when it, or another like it, was thrown back. It was followed by a fusillade of rocks and stones, and realising that he was under attack, Oberholtzer rushed back to his vehicle and was reaching for a rifle when a petrol bomb exploded over the car.

The embattled man then turned to confront his attackers, a shrill group of black men emerging from the undergrowth and bearing down upon him. Before he could bring his rifle to bear, however, a knife was plunged into his chest. As the group then fled with his firearm, Oberholtzer was able to enter his vehicle, mount the roadblock and drive for a short distance before he lost control and died. When help arrived, a note was found inserted in a cleft stick, close to the scene, reading: "Confrontation Smith. Crocodile Gang will soon kill all whites. Beware!"

All but one of the culprits was rapidly brought to book. A second escaped from police holding cells, and two were later hanged despite universal pleas for clemency and a Queen's Pardon. The event counted as the first politically motivated attack on a white since the rebellion of 1896, and whatever its real or symbolic importance, the killing of Petrus Oberholtzer blew the lid off what had previously been no more than civil unrest. The effect of it was to galvanise the security services into nipping black militancy in the bud, which they did very successfully, and the first round of the struggle, without doubt, went to them. This episode and the earlier discovery of arms in the trunk of a car led to an immediate tightening of border security along the Zambezi boundary, leading to further arms shipments being unearthed in both private vehicles and long distance haulage trucks. A rash of grenade attacks in Bulawayo followed as activists tried to dispose of their accumulated ordinance. In September 1964 a ZAPU group staged an abortive attack on the Kezi farmstead of former chief magistrate Farewell Roberts. The attackers were tracked for some distance and arrested by a black police sergeant.

Around this time, semi-organised groups of Zhanda began to be to be infiltrated into Rhodesia from Zambia with the ill-defined objective of attacking white farms and strategic government installations. In the main,

they were armed with nothing more than petrol bombs, and these were more often than not used against soft black targets. It was clear at this stage that the nationalists still entertained the hope that a few aggressive acts would cause all whites to pack up and leave the country. Perhaps it was also hoped that a general revolt would be triggered. The Rhodesian security services, however, acted with both speed and precision, and with a combination of good intelligence and thorough police work, they had little trouble bringing this phase of the struggle to an end.

The success of the Rhodesian security response was due mostly to good intelligence, derived almost entirely from black sources. Most rural black reported on the presence of strangers in their midst, while others provided police with information obtained from the youth themselves. Traditionally, intelligence was collected by community police through a network of local informants, later analysed and presented by Special Branch. Special Branch was a crucial player on the Rhodesian security field. It came into being in the early 1950s in response to unrest over the formation of the Federation, and by the early 1960s, it was a well developed and highly sophisticated domestic intelligence and security agency, attached to the British South Africa Police.

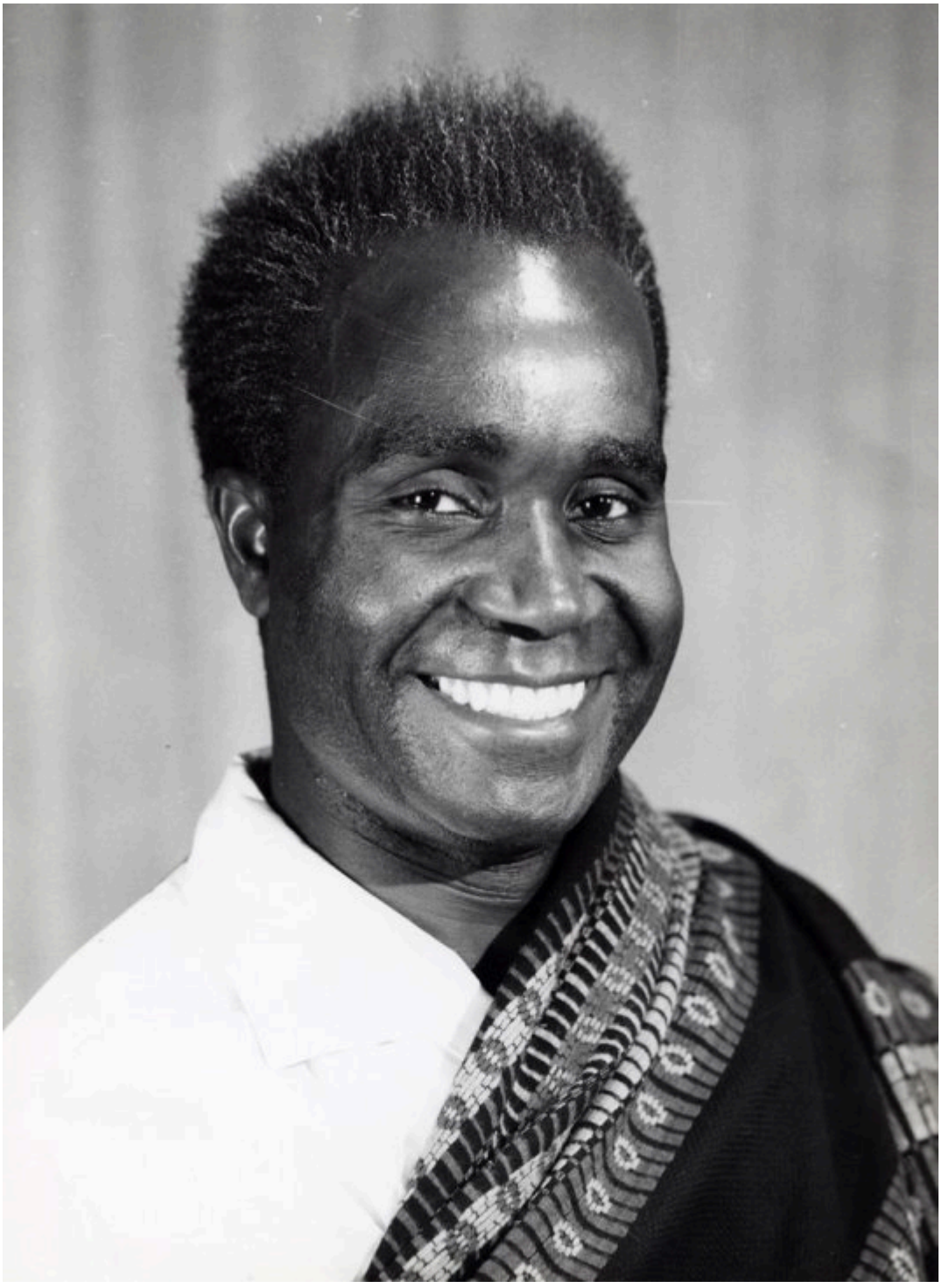
A dedicated intelligence and spy agency was not established in Rhodesia until Winston Field ordered the creation of the Central Intelligence Organization in October 1963, appointing as first director a BSAP veteran, Cornishman Ken Flower. Ken Flower would emerge as one of the key players in the crisis that developed as a consequence of the events that we are discussing, but for the moment, as a student of African warfare and nationalism, he was very well suited to the position. Special Branch was incorporated under the umbrella of the CIO, but remained a police affair nonetheless, and an early antipathy between the two organisations simmered for the remainder of the period and was never entirely healed.

This early work in intelligence would prove pivotal to events as they unfolded, but so riddled with informants, and so amateurish were the early nationalist militant branches that keeping one step ahead of their operations was hardly difficult. With scant resources and few established networks, the first nationalist recruiters tended to focus on the large black Rhodesian expatriate community in Zambia. There is no evidence a popular movement in this regard, and so a majority of early recruits were either press-ganged

or duped with promises of educational scholarships and were dismayed to be delivered instead to training camps in Tanzania. There they were given guns, run around the paddock for a day or two and then told they were going back to Rhodesia to fight. It took very little for these men to turn and betray their comrades at the first opportunity.

It is also true that both militant factions, ZAPU and ZANU, were unwelcome in Zambia, so their fighters were shunted south across the Zambezi River as soon as possible. Their first obstacle, of course, was the river itself, and the challenging geography of the Zambezi Valley. The Zambezi Valley served as a vast moat that protected the northern border of Rhodesia, and comprehensively patrolled by Security Force and National Parks personnel, there were very few insurgents that made it through. Those that did manage to get through to the populated areas of the highveld were quickly identified, and almost invariably reported upon by local villagers. The temptation to use their weapons for hunting or local banditry was also strong, which again made them vulnerable to detection. Locals were rewarded for information, and therefore routinely reported on insurgents whom they did not know, or necessarily care for.

In due course, a measure of peace returned to the countryside and the city streets of Rhodesia. The substantive leadership languished behind bars, and a cohort of amateurs were in charge of fighting a war. It was child's play. However, this ought not to imply that the spirit of resistance was broken, far from it. It meant merely that the optimistic and disorganised phase of the struggle had passed. The nationalist leadership now accepted that the revolution would be won only after a long and tough fight, and they needed now to retire to some quiet place to work out their differences and plan a better strategy.



Kenneth Kaunda

20
Smith Picks a Fight

Gorillas these days are found only in remote parts of the Mountains of the Moon. If you mean guerrillas, yes, but worried, no – **PK van de Byl**

On 29 March 1963, it was announced that Northern Rhodesia was to be granted the right to secede from the Central African Federation. The forty-year process of self-government in Southern Rhodesia reached a crossroads. This was, without doubt, the most bitter day in the life of Sir Roy Welensky, who had endured so many painful moments. The news was given him by the Secretary of State for Central African Affairs, Richard Austin 'Rab' Butler when the two met at No. 10 Downing Street for a luncheon with the Prime Minister. Welensky promptly spun on his heel and stormed off, explaining later: "I cannot accept the hospitality of a man who has betrayed me and my country."

Welensky then put behind him his long battle to keep Northern Rhodesia in the Federation and shifted the focus of his attention to Southern Rhodesia. He spoke powerfully for the right of Southern Rhodesia to independence, recognising in common with almost every other white man in the region, that his future was now bound up in events south of the Zambezi. "If Labour comes into power in Britain", he remarked, with bitter memories still vivid in his mind, "at least they might stab us in the breast and not in the back." It was his determination, and also that of the new territorial government in Salisbury, that if the Federation collapsed, then Southern Rhodesia must at any price be saved from the wreckage.

And, of course, the Federation was indeed on the verge of collapse. The two northern partners were by then moving towards independence, as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, but the future of Southern Rhodesia still lay mired in doubt. It was argued that if independence was to be the condition of federal dissolution, then that principle must apply to all. It was also taken for granted that it was a white responsibility to control the pace of majority rule according to Rhodes' maxim of 'equal rights for all civilised men'. It was also expected that the terms of the 1961 Constitution would be the basis for Southern Rhodesian independence. All of this, in the mind of white Rhodesia, was sane and perfectly reasonable. That the blacks

had turned around and repudiated the draft constitution the moment that it was signed was just further evidence of their political immaturity.

Winston Field was sworn into office as Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia on the understanding that he would hold the British to their promise. In gushing gratitude at white Rhodesia's absolute commitment to imperial defence in 1939, independence had been promised, and that was that. Whitehall my well now regret that promise, but it was a promise both made and earned. Field was now required to press that point with the British, knowing as everyone now did, that the British were more slippery than an eel.

Field, however, although he did not press the matter, was not of the opinion that any more independence could, or should be sought. The British were certainly trying their best, and Rhodesia was as independent of British rule as it was possible to be without actually lowering the Union Jack or recalling the Governor. Even the Governor was local, as was the military high command, and absolutely no direct imperial interference in Southern Rhodesian affairs had taken place for years. And if there was to be a war, which was daily more inevitable, then let it be a British war. The British did not want responsibility for Southern Rhodesia, but they could not relinquish it.

Faced with a groundswell of white nationalism, however, Field did not feel that he had much choice, and he duly responded to pressure to take the fight to the British. The next event in the Federal calendar was the dissolution conference to be held at Victoria Falls sometime in June. There the breakup of the Federation would be formalised and its assets divided up. The Southern Rhodesian Government decided to use this event as a lever, and at the end of March, Field despatched a letter to Rab Butler defining the position.

"I have now carefully considered the Southern Rhodesian attitude towards the Conference, he wrote, "and I wish to state that the Southern Rhodesian Government will not attend the Conference unless we receive in writing from you an acceptable undertaking that Southern Rhodesia will receive its independence concurrently with the date on which either Northern Rhodesia or Nyasaland is allowed to secede, whichever is first."

Sir Roy Welensky backed this up by stating that if Field chose to boycott the conference, he would withdraw the attendance of the Federal delegation too. This would, of course, make it very difficult for the British

Government to proceed at all, and Rab Butler fudged. He suggested more talks, to which Ian Smith responded by throwing his hands in the air and asking what more there was to talk about. Field, however, calmed his deputy and made his way to London alone to meet with Butler. His resolve was stiffened by repeated exhortations from Smith and Clifford Dupont, then Minister of Justice, to accept no compromise. The only ground he had authorisation to give was that independence *outside* the Commonwealth was acceptable if Britain feared the reaction of the Afro-Asian members of that club.

When the two men met, Butler indeed admitted that granting carte blanche independence to Southern Rhodesia might well precipitate the breakup of the Commonwealth, and that was to be avoided. Field was quick to remind him that most Commonwealth countries were now either one-party states or dictatorships that, under the rules of the Commonwealth, ought to disqualify them from presenting any opinions at all. On this point, Butler declined to be drawn, and instead pleaded with Field to attend the dissolution conference, which, if he agreed to do, then Butler undertook to visit Salisbury en route to Victoria Falls to finalise the details of independence.

Field accepted, this and returned to Salisbury to the angry disappointment of his cabinet. He preached caution, however, and reminded his colleagues that he could play the conference card only so far. If Butler broke up the Federation without a Southern Rhodesian delegation in attendance, Southern Rhodesia would be frozen out of the distribution of Federal assets. At stake was the bulk of the armed forces, including the Air Force, the railways, Air Rhodesia and the Central African Power Corporation. As it happened, however, Sir Roy Welensky made a generous award to Southern Rhodesia his minimum condition for attending the conference, and this was agreed to by the British as a necessary price of Malawian and Zambian independence.

Field, however, had swallowed the hook, and it was not long before he felt the first tug. A week before the conference was due to convene, Field was contacted by the British High Commissioner in Salisbury reporting that Butler's health was poor. He wondered whether Field and his delegation would spare him the effort of travelling to Salisbury, and meet him in Victoria Falls instead.

Field was understanding, realising that any refusal would be read as churlish. Cabinet was swayed to his point of view, and what follows is the account of the meeting recorded in Ian Smith's memoirs. According to Smith, Butler began with the lengthy acclamation: "In view of your country's wonderful record of 'responsible government' over the past forty years, during which time you have conducted yourself without blemish, managed your financial affairs in an exemplary fashion, and above all the great loyalty you have always given to Britain…" And so on. The colonials were then assured that Her Majesty's Government was giving careful consideration to Southern Rhodesia's request that independence be granted no later than Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Gratitude was also expressed to Field and his colleagues for attending the conference.

All eyes then turned to Smith, who thought for a moment before asking if an agreement was about to be signed. Butler retreated a little and pleaded that in familial affairs there must be trust. Smith emitted a derisive chuckle but otherwise said nothing. Field then stepped in, speaking mainly for himself, accepted Butler's trust and shaking his hand on it. Later, as the meeting broke up, Smith drifted alongside Butler and said softly: "Let's remember the trust you emphasised. If you break that you will live to regret it."

As the year progressed, Smith and several of his fellow cabinet members began to sense that Field was wavering. The Prime Minister did not dispute this but argued that his drift reflected a similar state of affairs in Whitehall. It was widely anticipated that Macmillan would retire, and Field argued that it would make sense to wait until then. As it turned out, he was right. In October 1963, Harold Macmillan retired on the grounds of ill health, and Alec Douglas Home moved into No. 10 Downing Street.

Ian Smith was immediately sent to London to test the waters. First, he met Duncan Sandys, who inherited responsibility for Southern Rhodesia from Rab Butler, and an immediate hostility was born between them. Three days later, Smith met Home and received a more cordial welcome from a man with whom he had much more in common. Home, however, as an unelected prime minister, was not particularly empowered to act. However, showing great sensitivity, he tried to explain to Smith that Afro-Asian bloc resistance to white rule in Rhodesia was not the only factor at play. There was a less easily definable mood in Britain that was no longer friendly to European interests in Africa. South Africa was also attracting a great deal of

negative attention, and the more ethnocentric white South Africa became, the more hostile grew the West. Smith could plead to his heart's content the mayhem and destruction wrought all over black Africa, but it would make no difference whatsoever. Smith argued for a simple honouring of past commitments, adding, for the sake of a fellow of the war generation, that the consequences of appeasement would mean the end of Rhodesia. Again, Home could not be moved, but promised that he would offer, via Duncan Sandys, something for Smith 'to take home with him'.

However, when he and Sandys later met, Sandys simply reiterated, with much less sensitivity, the difficulties that her Majesty's Government was facing. He urged flexibility on the part of the Rhodesian Government, suggesting the greater inclusion of blacks in government. To this Smith replied that under the 1961 Constitution, which Sandys himself had negotiated, the legislature, and by extension, the government was accessible to all Rhodesians. Had the nationalists not boycotted the process, more of them would be in government already. Sandys agreed, but like his superior, he was not impressed.

Smith then flew back to Salisbury. Soon afterwards Field was handed a despatch from Sandys in which he proposed a meeting to include the prime ministers of Canada, Australia and Tanzania. Field responded on behalf of his cabinet that the Rhodesian question was a matter entirely between Her Majesty's and his government, and furthermore, Julius Nyerere had no place on any panel of arbitration dealing with Rhodesia.

Field, however, had lost interest, and he knew the end was near. If Smith had the answers, then let Smith ask the questions. He retreated from public view and awaited the inevitable. Smith, however, was not quite ready. Field was sent back to London with instructions to threaten Whitehall with 'unspecified action' if immediate independence was not granted. 'Unspecified action', of course, was understood to mean a unilateral declaration of independence. He arrived in London towards the end of campaigning for a general election, and so no one had either the time or interest in his threats, so he returned home. Relations between Salisbury and London grew increasingly strained until one day a message from Whitehall was received warning the Rhodesians of the consequences of a unilateral declaration, and almost overnight unilateral independence became the talk of the nation.

In the meanwhile, Field suffered his Ides of March and was voted out of office. He left meekly, his fingered burned, and he saw no political office again. Smith assumed the leadership of the Party, and although long-standing friendships survived, it is unlikely the two men ever shared another dinner engagement. In London, Field's ouster was seen for what it was, and the effect of it was to bring the spectre of a unilateral declaration just a step closer. There was anguish in Whitehall just as there was throughout the free world. Clearly, this was more than a simple change of leadership, it was a shift to a virtual war footing.

21
The Third Man of Destiny

If Smith was a black man, I would say that he was the best Prime Minister that Zimbabwe ever had – **Morgan Tsvangirai**

Smith's first visit to London as Prime Minister was the tour de force of a man with no legitimate authority but monumental charisma. He was determined that he would tolerate no political chicanery, but acting with some cunning of his own sent ahead of a group of local chiefs on a goodwill visit, first to India and Pakistan, and then to Britain. Sensing the ruse, however, Douglas Home declined to meet them, handing them over instead to Duncan Sandys.

Smith, of course, was an easy man for the British to identify with, as they mourned the passing of the great days. He was a warrior of proven courage and loyalty and a son of the middle-classes who had grown strong in the tropics. He still spoke the almost forgotten language of men like Rhodes and Jameson, of Kitchener, Lawrence, Churchill and Montgomery. With his ponderous speech, but nimble intelligence, and with eyes gazing steadily through the scars of battle, the hero-starved British public took him easily to their hearts. That the British Government did not, was not for want of sentiment, but only in recognition of the fact that Ian Smith represented a dying institution.

To inform Smith of this reality, the British Government told him he would receive no invitation to attend the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, as Rhodesian prime ministers always had in the past. This was a heavy blow. Smith was an imperial subject, he had fought on the side of Britain in the War, and his worldview was vacant without it belonging to that sacred covenant. Rhodesia felt it too. It was not, of course, quite a parting of the ways, but an old alliance was definitely damaged.

Smith, however, was no fool. On his way home to Rhodesia, he stopped over in Portugal and held talks with Salazar. The Portuguese leader was briefed on the situation and warned that if Rhodesia cut ties with Britain, the friendship of Mozambique would be of the utmost importance. Salazar knew what side his bread was buttered on, and although treaty-bound to support Britain, Smith was assured that the leadership in Mozambique did not always follow metropolitan policy.

Then there was South Africa. The difficulty of Salisbury's relationship with Pretoria was as old as the Boer hatred of England, but Smith could be fairly confident that ties of common interest would keep the South Africans engaged. This left only the home front, where unilateral independence was by no means overwhelmingly endorsed. The loyalty of the army had not yet been tested, and one could never tell. Then there was the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs. Who could say which side he would step across to?

Talks between Home and Smith were held in London on 7 September 1964. The issue now centred on the ability of the Rhodesian Government to satisfy the British that any change of status had the full support of the majority. Smith pointed to the ostensibly multiracial franchise and proposed a referendum, which brought both men more or less back to square one. A general election was due in a matter of weeks, and Prime Minister Home was disinclined to add his body to a battlefield already littered with Conservative corpses. Thus, in a somewhat defeatist frame of mind, both he and Duncan Sandys were content to let the issue drift.

Smith, however, was prepared to do no such thing, and even though the Conservatives were not particularly interested in hearing it, he devised a strategy to elicit black opinion. In those days, Ian Smith trusted entirely in the merits of his case. He believed with utter conviction that the nationalists were violent extremists, and their followers an army of thugs. What he thought he knew about black opinion could be anyone's guess, but he certainly did know a thing or two about black politics. As Robert Tredgold observed of an earlier political generation, it would, and usually did take very little to sway black opinion with the use of terror. It could be taken entirely for granted that, following the announcement of such a referendum, levels of violence would spiral. Smith, therefore, looked instead to the chiefs and traditional leaders to speak on behalf of the people.

The problem in this, however, lay in the fact that, over the years since the occupation, the nation's traditional leadership had undergone a gradual induction into government service. Of late they tended to be chosen, appointed and removed when necessary by the government. They were given ceremonial uniforms and paid a regular stipend as virtual civil servants. There was a handful who could claim independence, but the majority had by and large been compromised. Smith heard numerous

warnings, not least from Duncan Sandys, that a Council of Chiefs would *not* be considered an acceptable test of black opinion. Nonetheless, he went ahead and ordered the convening of a 'Great Indaba' to which over 600 chiefs were summoned.

The event took place on 22 October 1964 in Domboshawa, just outside Salisbury, where for five days the assembled chiefs debated the desirability of independence under the terms of the 1961 Constitution. Although representatives from Australia, Austria, France, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Greece and South Africa observed the event, not a single official delegate representing the government of the United Kingdom was present.

A week before the Indaba, Britain went to the polls, and from the ashes of the Profumo Affair, there emerged a reinvigorated Labour phoenix. Prime Minister-elect Harold Wilson's victory was less than a landslide, but it nonetheless gave him the keys to No. 10.[9] This meant if Welensky was to be believed, that Rhodesian whites could now expect to be stabbed in the chest as well as in the back. Naturally, Harold Wilson dismissed the Great Indaba as a publicity stunt, but he nonetheless settled into office with a keen eye on Ian Smith. Smith, in the meanwhile, was given his black endorsement when the assembly of chiefs returned a substantial verdict in his favour.

This result did, without doubt, reflect the limited scope of moderate black opinion in Rhodesia, and with it Smith was satisfied. Soon afterwards, a general referendum was held over the same question, returning a practically unanimous vote in favour. A unilateral declaration of independence, now generally referred to as UDI, was not mentioned at all, except, of course, to make clear that the referendum was not to be considered a vote for or against it. Black voters, quite naturally, boycotted the ballot almost entirely.

There at last now appeared to be two men in office sufficiently secure to deal with one another. In the beginning, however, the two advanced cautiously and were slow to break the ice, for the ice was unusually thick. Wilson quite willingly declared himself to be a left-wing intellectual, a pipe-smoking technocrat of the English middle-classes. He boasted an Oxford degree won entirely on merit, with no hint of blue-blood to back it up. This was British Labour in full effect, democratic, liberal and unashamedly anti-imperial – the absolute antithesis, indeed, of the administration in Salisbury.

At some point during the election campaign, Wilson nailed his colours to the mast and wrote an open letter to a mostly unknown Rhodesian nationalist with whom he was acquainted. Doctor Elisha Mutasa was the son of Chief Mutasa, modestly educated, but highly ambitious, who ran into Harold Wilson at some point during his long residence in Britain. To Mutasa, Wilson laid bare the facts. “The Labour Party,” he wrote, “is totally opposed to granting independence to Southern Rhodesia so long as the government of that country remains under the control of the white minority. We have repeatedly urged the British Government to negotiate a new Constitution with all the African and European parties represented in order to achieve a peaceful transition to African majority rule.”

These were indeed the facts laid bare, the very same facts that had hampered the goodwill of men like Macmillan and Home, and would no doubt thwart Wilson now. Neither of Wilson’s most recent predecessors would have been so frank about their positions, nor would Wilson be in the future, but the damage was done, and the damage was severe.

The letter was unearthed and made public in the midst of the Great Indaba, and immediately British credibility in respect of Rhodesia plummeted. Whites saw Harold Wilson as a lily-livered ideologue, displaying a cavalier attitude to a problem that he quite clearly did not understand. It was, of course, probably asking too much of Wilson to have any real feeling for the crisis at that early stage, but he certainly could have kept his mouth shut until he did. Smith might also simply have shrugged the matter off, but he was in a fighting mood and made no particular effort to hide it. Traditionally Labour was no friend of white Rhodesia, and early communications between the two capitals tended to confirm this.

The first of these was an apparently cordial message from incoming Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, Arthur Bottomley, who was shortly due to travel to Zambia for talks with Kaunda. Bottomley suggested that before his Kaunda meeting he and Smith meet in Salisbury for a round of familiarisation talks. He added, however, that he would only consider doing so if the meeting included Ndabaningi Sithole and Joshua Nkomo. This was a bad start, and the offer was immediately rejected. The two nationalists, Smith reminded Bottomley, were imprisoned not for political reasons but for their criminal activities. The chiefs represented black opinion in Rhodesia, and Bottomley could meet as many of those as he wished. With that the Office of Commonwealth Affairs was silenced,

although a letter soon followed from the Office of the Prime Minister, expressing regret that Smith had chosen to snub his Secretary of State. Wilson then invited Smith to visit London for talks, which Smith declined, claiming pressures of work.

Wilson must have been stung by something in Smith's tone, for his reply was immediate and angry. In effect it was a demand that Smith at once state in writing that there would be no unilateral declaration of independence, failing which the British Government would issue a public statement warning of the severe consequences of such a step. Smith would have been entirely within his rights to ignore this outburst, but he went one better, demanding from Wilson a written statement outlining the exact position of his government on the question of Rhodesian independence. Neither statement was issued, and after Wilson had taken a moment taken to regain his composure, he lowered the pitch, assuring the Rhodesian Prime Minister that if the two governments were to meet, Smith would not find the British unwilling to compromise.

As far as Smith was concerned, the question was settled, and furthermore, the wishes of black and white had been spoken. What precisely was there to talk about. However, after a fortnight of reflection, he wrote Wilson a scathing letter demanding that his British counterpart, once and for all, submit a definitive reply on the question of independence. 'Once and for all', of course, is a concept alien to politics, and Wilson's reply, when it came was evasive, stating only that various items of financial aid promised to Rhodesia as part of the federal dissolution were premised on the understanding that relations between the two governments remain stable. Under current circumstances, however, this was not the case.

Smith, of course, was enraged, but before he could build up an honest head of steam, the squabble was interrupted in January 1965 by the death of Winston Churchill. For the duration of the mourning period, no member of the British family could in good conscience concern itself with anything else. The break in personal hostilities, however, came as a relief to both men, while the funeral would at least force them to shake hands. This, it was hoped, would draw some of the sting out of all of the early unpleasantness.

As a British Prime Minister, heir to a long and august tradition, Harold Wilson certainly does come across as a devious and rather unsavoury character. As an Oxford don he was well respected, and as a

liberal ideologue even more so, but as a political strategist he tended to rely to an unhealthy extent on half-truths, misrepresentation and deceit. Smith, on the other hand, was unusually straightforward and uncomplicated for a politician. If on occasion he was forced to manipulate the facts, he was rarely if ever guilty of ignoring them. Moreover, he had absolutely no intellectual pretensions, while Wilson at times seemed to have nothing else. The two men loathed one another even before they met. Smith despised Wilson because Wilson spent the war years behind a desk in London preoccupied with irrelevant statistics, while Smith exchanged fire with the Germans and Italians from the cockpit of his Spitfire. Wilson was a traitor to everything that Smith held dear, and to illustrate the bitter degradation of the British race, he was now an abject slave to the Afro-Asian blocs of the United Nations and the Commonwealth. Wilson, of course, hated Smith because he was an imperialist and a racist.

Nothing could be done, however, to prevent Ian Smith from attending Churchill's funeral, which he did, but it was noted that he received no invitation to a luncheon hosted by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. To his credit, Smith took this snub in his stride and lunched instead with friends. He was pleasantly surprised, however, when the Queen's Equerry found him in a restaurant in Mayfair and handed him a note expressing Her Majesty's regret at any misunderstanding, and her hope that he would honour her by attending the luncheon immediately. This he did and was personally greeted by Her Majesty and Prince Philip, who both showed great interest in Rhodesia. Wilson, in the meanwhile, seated a short distance away, was seen to glower, but nothing was said. He later claimed that Smith had an invitation in his pocket all along, which might have been true, but it was Wilson who emerged from the episode as the petty villain, not Smith.

Wilson, however, made a virtue out of necessity and suggested to Smith that since they were both in town they might as well meet. As an afterthought, he suggested that Smith and his party use the side entrance to No. 10 Downing Street, so as not to alert the press. Smith agreed and later recalled in his memoir that a cordial and restrained meeting ended in an agreement that Bottomley and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Gardiner, would visit Rhodesia.

For his part, Wilson remembered that he found Smith "extremely difficult, extremely sour and not a little bit offensive." He further

remembered sitting through a virtual sermon as Smith gave vent to considerable spleen against his "obsessional aversions". Many who knew Smith would not have disowned this possibility, and among those 'obsessional aversions' were present and past British Governments, the United Nations and both the Commonwealth and its independent community of states. Wilson also maintained that immediately after the meeting, Smith ran into the Australian and Canadian Prime Ministers and to them denied having met Wilson at all. When Wilson heard this, he was inclined to wonder about the "character of the man with whom I am dealing."

A month later, Arthur Bottomley and Lord Gardiner did indeed arrive in Salisbury, where they gathered as broad a spectrum of opinion as they could, as well as briefing the decision-makers on British terms for independence. These terms included the principal of unimpeded progress to majority rule; guarantees against retrogressive amendment of the Constitution; immediate improvement in the political status of blacks; progress towards the ending of racial discrimination and the most vital point, that the British Government be completely satisfied that proposals for independence had *the support of a majority of the population*. This would all become known as 'NIBMAR', or 'No Independence Before Majority Rule'.

From what Bottomley and Gardiner were able to determine, however, there seemed to be no clear consensus in the country at all. Those chiefs they met struck a note of caution by reminding the pair of deep political decay elsewhere in black Africa and warned that the same fate almost certainly awaited Rhodesia. This, of course, was the most conservative opinion available from blacks, but it nevertheless represented a very valid point. The nationalists, on the other hand, demanded that power be handed to them immediately, while, of course, a vast majority of whites insisted that it remain theirs exclusively. One group had the power, and the other had the numbers. It certainly was a very tricky situation indeed.

Back in Britain, in the meanwhile, Arthur Bottomley chose to gloss over much of what he had heard in Rhodesia, presenting a conciliatory report to the House of Commons. This, in turn, prompted Wilson to send a placatory message to Smith, which was little more than a drop of oil on a troubled ocean. Smith now knew that he had a fight on his hands, and decided that the moment was right to seek a fresh mandate. A ballot was

held on 7 May 1965, revealing a full swing to the right of white opinion. Smith was amazed at both the voter turnout and the result. The Rhodesian Front swept all fifty 'A' roll seats, and of the fifteen 'B' roll seats, thirteen went to black candidates, one to an Asian and one to a white independent.

In one fell swoop, the Rhodesian Front became omnipotent. To mop up every seat available to it was almost unheard of in any British election. It was an extraordinary performance, and the British were at last forced to sit up and take notice. The Afro-Asian bloc in both the United Nations and the Commonwealth was, of course, dismayed. The Indian charge d'affaires to Rhodesia told the Governor Sir Humphrey Gibbs that his government saw the election as a prelude to UDI, and the Indian mission in Salisbury closed its doors forthwith.

In July 1965, British Minister of State Cledwyn Hughes arrived in Salisbury with the rather vague objective of finding grounds to reopen dialogue. To Smith and his Cabinet colleagues, dialogue was now little more than an irritating diversion. It was incumbent on them to give a hearing to any new British initiatives, but this was done with a manifest lack of enthusiasm. Smith conceded only that he would accept the formation of a senate to house some black members who might possibly wield a constitutional blocking mechanism.

With this possible bicameral solution in mind, Arthur Bottomley replied, suggesting that a meeting between himself and the Rhodesian Prime Minister might be desirable. Amid stern warnings of growing Rhodesian impatience, Smith agreed, and delegations from the two governments met in London early in October. From the onset, however, the Rhodesians were regaled by demands for constitutional amendments that would have left the 1961 Constitution virtually unrecognisable. Smith repeated his willingness to allow black opinion to be expressed through a senate but would be pushed no further than this. Wilson then suggested the repeal of the Land Apportionment Act, which again made it obvious that Wilson had no intention of conceding a settlement that either de facto or de jure would leave power in the hands of whites.

At this point, it is not inconceivable that Harold Wilson also saw UDI as the cleanest solution. He believed, and said as much, that a rebel Rhodesian government would be brought to its knees by economic action in a matter of weeks. He prevaricated, however, deliberated and smoked copious quantities of Rhodesian pipe tobacco, but could be drawn to no

definite commitment. The series of meetings ended with a simple communiqué. “Despite intensive discussion, no means has been found of reconciling opposing views. No further meeting is planned.”

A ‘Twenty-Four Hours’ interview featuring Ian Smith was scheduled by the BBC to be aired that evening, but in an apparent effort to avoid a damaging build-up of sympathy, Wilson at the last minute caused the interview to be cancelled. True to form, he denied this but was drawn to admit it later, not that there was ever any real doubt.

Before leaving London, Smith made contact with old friends in the Conservative Party, and through leaders Edward Heath and Selwyn Lloyd proposed a treaty that would guarantee no regression of black political rights. Wilson accepted the suggestion, although it is unlikely that he took it very seriously, and proposed a final meeting to hammer out the details. The two men duly met, but except for a vague commitment by the British Prime Minister that he would consider the new proposal, no movement was reported.

A few days later, Wilson was interviewed by the BBC, during which he restated the dangers of UDI, and the likely consequences to Rhodesia should it be declared. “I know I speak for everyone in these islands,” he said, “all parties, all people, when I say to Mister Smith: Prime Minister, think again!”

Smith’s response was just as emotional. In what he termed an eleventh-hour petition to the British Government, he repeated his government’s terms of settlement, and appealed to the British people to act with goodwill and decency in the treatment of their kith and kin abroad.

While both of these submissions had about them an air of finality, there was more to come. Wilson contacted Smith, and showing some signs of alarm, suggested that he and Bottomley fly out and try one more time to find common ground. He arrived in Rhodesia on 25 October 1965 at the head of a large and impressive entourage and wasted no time in trying to stretch and manipulate Smith’s offer of a treaty. This succeeded only in infuriating Smith, after which Wilson embarked on an extravagant tour of the country. Before leaving, he handed Smith a handwritten letter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth that read:

Dear Mr Smith,

> I have followed the recent discussions between the British Government and your government with the closest concern and am glad to know that Mr Wilson will be paying you a visit. I earnestly hope that your discussion in finding a solution to the current difficulties succeeds. I would be glad if you would accept my best wishes and convey them to all my people in your country, whose welfare and happiness I have very closely at heart.
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Elizabeth R.

It is unfortunate that Smith took this to infer that Wilson had somehow subverted the traditional impartiality of the Queen to his cause, which implies that Smith's faith in the British must certainly by then have been very severely damaged indeed. Some satisfaction was no doubt felt when Smith learned that Wilson's discussions with Sithole and Nkomo had been both difficult and acrimonious. This, he hoped, would help the British Prime Minister to understand that the Rhodesian Government was not dealing with reasonable men, but a mob of unprincipled fanatics. Wilson was told by the imprisoned nationalists that they would entertain nothing less than the immediate use of British force to affect majority rule. In reply, Wilson made it plain that the use of force was out of the question. Lord Devonshire had earlier stressed to Nkomo that an overnight handover to majority rule was not in Britain's immediate plans, and nothing had changed. A military strike would necessitate an immediate transfer, and that was much further than Wilson was prepared to go. In the absence of a phased and democratic exchange of power, the blacks would just have to wait.

On the back of this hard message, Wilson was guilty perhaps of improvising a smokescreen. He discovered that Sithole and Nkomo had been kept in a holding cell for most of the day with no refreshments, and about this, he made a demonstrative fuss, no doubt hoping to divert attention from matters for which he might be held accountable. The nationalists each faced an indefinite prison term that would likely end only when the government was toppled, and of this, Wilson could offer no immediate prospect. The room in which the three met, of course, was bugged, and by making it known that military force would not be

contemplated in the event of UDI, Wilson simply provided impetus to Smith and his colleagues to press ahead with it.

In the end, Wilson could come up with nothing better than to propose a royal commission of inquiry with ample terms of reference, and to this Smith warily agreed. Wilson conceded that if the commission produced a report favourable to the Rhodesians, then there would be little he could do but accept it. If this was to be believed, it was music to Rhodesian ears. The principal was agreed upon, and Wilson departed, leaving Smith with the feeling that it all seemed a little too good to be true.

Soon enough, those terms of reference arrived in Salisbury for cabinet approval. A codicil, however, had been attached stating that Whitehall would not commit itself in advance to accepting the report. In other words, if the British did not like what they heard they would not accept it. This, of course, simply returned the situation right back to square one. All the while, Smith and his cabinet quietly went about the business of laying the groundwork for UDI. Wilson greased the wheels by confirming in an address to the British nation on 30 October 1965 that force would not be used against Rhodesia. “If there are those in this country who are thinking in terms of a thunderbolt, hurtling through the sky and destroying their enemy, a thunderbolt in the shape of the Royal Air Force, let me say this thunderbolt will not be coming.”

Harold Wilson

22
Kith and Kin

If the European is ousted from his pride of place, it could only be done by an intelligent race – a requirement that precludes the African –
Lieutenant-Colonel Ichabod Allen

Calls for a violent solution to this impasse were not confined to a humble police holding cell in Salisbury. As demoralised and depressed as the two nationalist leaders were, they were well informed and knew they enjoyed powerful support. Seen in this context, it is possible to feel some sympathy for the way Harold Wilson handled his complicated relationship with Smith. He not only had the partisanship of his own government to consider but also persistent pressure from the United Nations and the Commonwealth. Canada and Australia were to be found aggressively campaigning against white Rhodesia, and by 1965, the issue so dominated proceedings of the Commonwealth that there were fears the organisation had become an African pressure group. If accusations of treachery and disloyalty made against Britain by white Rhodesia were true, then it seems odd that Wilson should have fought so hard for his government to retain the sole right to handle the Rhodesian crisis.

On 5 May 1965 the United Nations Security Council adopted a unanimous resolution calling on Britain, and indeed warning her, not to accept a unilateral declaration of independence by Rhodesia. During the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference of that year, Doctor Kwame Nkrumah proposed a six-point plan. If a constitutional conference including all parties was not convened, then Britain should suspend the current constitution, put in place an interim and representative government and prepare the country for a general election. Julius Nyerere gave powerful vocal support to this plan and added his own reproach to Britain for failing to use force in Rhodesia, as she had done in Cyprus, Kenya, Aden and British Guiana. He was dismissive of Wilson's claim that the logistics and risks of mounting a military invasion of Southern Rhodesia were prohibitive.

Time and again, the kith and kin argument was used, and in truth, it was not an entirely spurious point. Wilson knew that Her Majesty's Armed Forces would fight where they were ordered to, but he also knew that no

command on earth would make them happy about it. Rhodesian whites were seen in many influential quarters as being vilified for no more than keeping the shredded standard of British dignity aloft. If Smith was gambling on this perception, he was doing so with very fair odds. The mood of the British public was well illustrated by a cover of *Private Eye* magazine featuring a cartoon by Gerald Scarfe, in which Smith was depicted with his unbelted trousers down, forcing a black man's face to his backside, with a caption reading: 'Kith my arse!'

At its Heads of State and Government meeting of 25 October 1965, held in Ghana, the assembled leaders of the Organization of African Unity voiced their grave concern at Britain's apparent support of a minority and racist government. Rhodesia, the organisation declared, was a threat to world peace. A resolution was adopted deploring the refusal of the British Government to meet with firmness the threat of a unilateral declaration of independence. It further called on Britain to suspend the 1961 Constitution and take the necessary steps, including armed force, to retake control of the territory. Failure to do this would result in members reconsidering all political, economic, diplomatic and financial relations with Britain.

As this OAU resolution was under debate, Harold Wilson was winding up his eleventh-hour visit to Rhodesia. As he departed the colony, he could not shake off the feeling that Smith was about to do the unthinkable. He no doubt hoped most fervently that a rebel government would quickly collapse, as he had widely predicted it would. If it did not, he was in for a very rocky ride indeed.

Back in Salisbury, advance preparations for UDI were indeed underway. As a matter of priority, foreign reserves were shifted out of England and placed in South Africa, and those service chiefs and senior civil servants whose loyalty was suspect were urged to resign. The Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, was one of these, and, in fact, the whole business put him in a most difficult position. Humphrey Gibbs was, by vocation, a farmer, and only a very reluctant participant in politics. His appointment to the office of Governor had been strictly in a caretaker capacity, upon the understanding that legal independence was just around the corner. His first instinct, therefore, was to follow the informal advice given to him and simply offer his resignation. He was, however, urged by the British Government to sit tight for the time being. He then sounded out Ken Flower, the phlegmatic head of the Central Intelligence Organisation,

who confirmed that his options were few. Technically, as Governor, he was empowered to pronounce a unilateral declaration illegal, and call upon the security services to enforce a restoration of legality, however, although the senior command would undoubtedly respect such an order, they would be unlikely to issue any such command, fearful that the rank and file would mutiny.

The judiciary too was placed in an awkward position. Some on the bench advocated issuing a joint statement that UDI would be regarded as illegal, while others maintained that this would represent unwarranted interference in the political process. Generally, the legal community was as divided as everyone else, and indeed, in every parlour, club, barber shop and tea room, little else was discussed. In the end, the situation was resolved by a communication from the Lord Chancellor addressed to the Chief Justice, stating that it could not be considered treasonable for judges to remain in office in the event of UDI.

The government, meanwhile, moved to secure control of the media, and in the case of the electronic services, it succeeded. By the end of 1964, the Parliamentary Secretary for Information had successfully purged the television and radio stations to the extent that they had both become virtual propaganda arms of the government. The Argus held true to its long history of editorial independence, although a certain necessary caution began to characterise its criticism of the government. After securing an undated proclamation of a State of Emergency from the Governor, Ian Smith put the police and armed forces on standby.

On 10 November 1965, as a full cabinet meeting was in session, the British High Commissioner appeared with an oral message from Wilson to Smith. Whatever it contained, it shed no new light on the situation and offered no fresh hope. At the conclusion of the meeting, all ministers were sent home with instructions from the Prime Minister to give the matter a final night of reflection. The following morning, as the Cabinet reassembled, a telephone call from Harold Wilson came through.

Smith took it, and after a protracted conversation returned to the Cabinet Room. Again, he reported, nothing new was on the table. Was it then to be ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ he asked, and in response, each minister nodded his head. The decision was unanimous. Rhodesia would declare a Unilateral Declaration of Independence forthwith. The time was eleven o’clock on November 11 1965, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh

month, a deeply symbolic moment, and precisely the anniversary of the Armistice, declared forty-seven-years earlier. Rhodesia was on its own.

Part III

The Problem Child of the Empire

1965-1980

I am still the Hitler of the time. This Hitler has only one objective, justice for his own people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people – **Robert Mugabe**

1
UDI: The beginning of the end

You whites had it all wrong. UDI was a benevolent act which gave Africans their chance politically and otherwise. Sanctions helped in that they led to great diversification and much development which was of material benefit to Africans

The unilateral declaration of independence, forever known as UDI, was signed, and ten minutes later, Ian Smith and Clifford Dupont drove up Borrowdale Road to Government House. There waiting for them was Governor Sir Humphrey Gibbs. The three shook hands, for they were all well acquainted. Smith and Dupont were in high spirits, but Gibbs was visibly shaken. Dupont reported later in his memoir that he was moved by the evident distress of 'this loyal Englishman, who had spent so much of his life in Rhodesia'. Bearing in mind that Gibbs arrived in Southern Rhodesia twenty years earlier than Dupont, it seems rather fallacious for him to be described as an 'Englishman' while Dupont declared himself a 'Rhodesian.' Nonetheless, all three stuck to the script.

"Gentlemen," Gibbs addressed his visitors, "you realise that I cannot condone your decision. I presume you want me to retire to my farm and see if I can get any more milk out of my cows?"

This eased the tension, and Smith and Dupont both smiled and agreed that this would be for the best. Gibbs, of course, was relieved too but asked for a day or two grace while he cast a few flies on the rivers of Inyanga before making any definite announcements. This he did, but upon returning, found Chief Justice Sir Hugh Beadle waiting for him with a plea from the British Government. The presence of a British Governor could not be relinquished while the country was in such legal hiatus, and it was imperative that Gibbs remain in office.

This was a bitter moment for Sir Humphrey, but he had little choice but to accept it, and on 15 November, four days after the declaration, Smith was informed that Gibbs intended to remain in office to support the current constitution. By this announcement, Gibbs effectively dismissed Smith and his cabinet, leaving Rhodesia with no legitimate government. He then advised the judiciary, the armed forces and the police that it was their primary duty to maintain law and order in the colony, which relieved a great

many minds. Besides that, his instructions from London were to just sit tight and hold the fort as best he could. Sir Hugh Beadle joined him at Government House in a gesture of solidarity.

Smith's response, in the meanwhile, was to supplant the post of the governor with an appointment entitled 'Officer Administering the Government', and the officer so named was Clifford Dupont. Dupont, however, remained in his ministerial home in Salisbury while Gibbs continued his occupation of Government House in what was officially termed 'his private capacity'.

Immediately after Dupont's appointment, the government set about establishing the terms of its own existence. All right of appeal to the Privy Council was abolished, while the right to alter the entrenched clauses of the constitution was vested in a two-thirds majority, and no longer by a referendum of each of the racial groups. The existing franchise for the moment remained unchanged, as did the Constitutional Council, the Declaration of Rights and the inviolability of the native reserves, now known as Tribal Trust Lands. Gibbs was informed that the Rhodesian Government was in effective control of the country and that any instructions that he received from Whitehall no longer had any validity.

Sir Humphrey's occupation of Government House began what became known as the 'Battle of the Books'. The Government provided books in all the main centres so that citizens could sign an expression of loyalty to the person of the Queen but in effect the new Rhodesian Government. Gibbs, on the other hand, opened a book at Government House and invited loyal citizens to express their allegiance to him as the Queen's representative. The Government books, of course, received a great many more signatures, but qualitatively Gibbs triumphed. Lord Malvern, for example, the much loved Godfrey Huggins, signed the Governor's book and, with his encouragement, many others of the old establishment followed suit.

For three and a half years, Humphrey Gibbs lived in a state of virtual house arrest in the large and empty Government House. He seldom left the property, worrying that if he did some government official would creep in and lock him out. This was not an idle fear, for although no such attempt was made, the government did have his telephone lines disconnected and his official car and salary discontinued. He was connected by telephone only to London and the British mission in Salisbury. Any

efforts he made to publicise his situation were frustrated by heavy-handed censorship of the media.

The Argus press was not accustomed to this type of treatment and responded by producing editions of the *Rhodesia Herald* and other newspapers with more blank spaces on the pages than print. Even Huggins was censored from airing his views, and when finally his opinions were published, it was in the *Times* of London, and he had some sobering advice for his successors.

"Surely they have the wit to learn", he wrote, "if they can learn anything, that what a revolting minority can do, a revolting majority can do so much better."

It was Lord Malvern, and others of the old school, like Sir Roy Welensky, who maintained a fund to support Sir Humphrey throughout his vigil. Smith's administration, of course, could easily have removed him from Government House if it had felt the need, and perhaps for Gibbs' own sake that would have been for the best. His protest cried out for some sort of resolution, but the Government did nothing. It was an awkward situation. While Gibbs could not publicly back down, and this for many reasons, some sentimental and some political, no one in government really wanted to take on the task of forcing him out.

In the meanwhile, several high ranking military officers visited, each reaffirmed his loyalty to the Crown, and urging a warrant of arrest for Smith and Dupont. However, even if he had wanted to, Gibbs clearly had no power to do this. As Ken Flower, among many others, warned him, the brass did not necessarily speak for the rank and file. It is notable that Brigadier Rodney Putterill, current chief-of-staff, found it necessary to reprimand Rhodesia Light Infantry commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Walls, for allowing his men to wear paper hats reading 'RLI for UDI' at a 1964 Christmas party. Clearly, any attempt to arrest the conspirators would be an open invitation for a coup d'état. Gibbs, therefore, had no option but to dig in and sit it out, which in the end was precisely what he did.

In the meanwhile, on the evening of 11 November 1965, Prime Minister Ian Smith delivered an address to the nation. "We Rhodesians," he said, "have rejected the doctrinaire philosophy of appeasement and surrender. The decision which we have taken today is a refusal by Rhodesians to sell their birthright. And, even if we were to surrender, does

anyone believe that Rhodesia would be the last target of the Communists in the Afro-Asian bloc? We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity; and in the spirit of this belief, we have this day assumed our sovereign independence. God bless you all."

Thus Ian Smith staked out the twin terms of his revolution. The first was an appeal to a sense of patriotism and the second to draw a line in the sand against the spread of communism in Africa. In the first instance, genuine patriotism could only really appeal to a handful of the Rhodesian whites. To the few like himself, who had been born in Rhodesia, his words probably rang true. To the majority, however, who were recent immigrants, it would seem to stretch a point mightily to suppose they would lay their lives down for Rhodesia. This was not the land of their ancestors, and nor even of their parents. Of the sixteen ministers who were party to the decision to declare UDI, only six, including Smith, had actually been born in Rhodesia.

Then there was the question of standing firm against communism, as the spineless British, their greatest days behind them, genuflected to the Africans and Asians of the Commonwealth. This, of course, only obscured the fundamental issue, which was the failure of the black and white races of Rhodesia to coexist. If communists had infiltrated the Afro-Asian bloc, as Smith and others implied, then it was only in keeping with the mood of the times. If nothing else, innate African cupidity tended to offer very stony ground for Marxism, but if moral and material support were forthcoming from nowhere else, then Africans were as Marxist as it was necessary to be.

Smith might have fooled a handful of Rhodesians with this sort of propaganda, but he certainly fooled nobody else. What he wanted to say, and what a majority of whites probably heard him say, was that the utter and proven catastrophe of black rule must at all costs be avoided. He also took pleasure in noting, as the news of UDI circulated around the globe, that the Commonwealth and the United Nations both erupted with the wrath of a smoking beehive. There was, he wryly observed, at least one loyal subject of Her Majesty still willing to raise the standard, and while some saw this as merely building ramparts against the inevitable, there were many other Britons around the world who drank a quiet toast to Ian Smith that night.

British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, however, was not one of these. In fact, UDI hit him like a tornado, and his first few days in the

aftermath were spent dousing the fury, and assuring his international partners that the British Government intended to restore both legality and freedom to Rhodesia. The initiative for this, however, had by then largely been squandered. Harold Wilson did not have the tools to directly interfere, and as Smith was apt to remark, there was more freedom in Rhodesia than anywhere in Black Africa. This was undoubtedly true, and indeed, Wilson was forced to appease some of the most brutal and disreputable men of his times. Rhodesia existed under the rule of law, without a whiff of corruption, and independence had been achieved without a single burning barricade, shot fired or drop of blood shed. With very few exceptions, this was not the case anywhere north of the Zambezi, but it did not matter. Under current democratic norms, it was the right of the majority to rule, and if that resulted inevitably in the looting and destruction of the nation, then so be it.

Qualitatively, however, how can Smith's decision be judged? In the first instance, the potential for international recognition was zero, and because of that, war was inevitable. Rhodesia, however, would now fight that war alone, and almost certainly under conditions of sanctions. It also was entirely unfeasible that conditions of minority rule could survive under any circumstances, and since it had proved impossible to persuade successive British administrations that 'good' government was more important than 'self' government, what hope would there be now? Every discussion henceforth hinged on a return to legality, which would mean Smith handing power back to the Governor, which, of course, was out of the question. It is hard, even with the benefit of hindsight, to understand exactly what Ian Smith hoped to achieve.

Soon afterwards, in the meanwhile, the British House of Commons met in emergency session, and once expressions of regret had been exhausted, the debate settled down to the question of how to manage international reaction, and how to keep the whole business in the family. With almost unprecedented haste, the Southern Rhodesia Act of 1965 was debated and passed, confirming that the Rhodesia remained a dominion of Her Majesty, and by Order in Council power was conferred on the Government to impose economic and other sanctions.

Soon afterwards an assortment of sanctions was rolled out. The British High Commissioner was withdrawn from Salisbury, and his opposite number expelled from London. Economic measures included a moratorium on the export of arms and spare parts, and any British aid or

financial assistance was frozen. Rhodesia was removed from the sterling area, and its access to the London capital market was halted. Export credit guarantees were withdrawn, and Rhodesia was suspended from the Commonwealth Preference Area. An import ban was imposed on such products as Rhodesian sugar and tobacco. Omitted from the list of banned products were various strategic minerals and Rhodesian beef. There was no mention either of a fuel embargo, something that would have been pivotal to the success of any serious economic offensive.

As these economic sanctions were being rolled out, they were condemned by the OAU, the Commonwealth and the United Nations as inadequate. Wilson, it was said, threw the book at Rhodesia, one page at a time. Black African diplomats beseeched the United Nations Security Council to take action, and it did. Within a week, two new resolutions were rolled out, the first calling on all member states to neither recognise nor assist the rebel government, and the second declaring Rhodesia a threat to international peace and security. Both stopped short of any direct censure of the United Kingdom, and no mandatory sanctions were imposed. The only abstention was France, which offered up the welcomed position that Rhodesia was strictly a British affair.

The Rhodesia question also dominated the agenda of an emotional OAU Council of Ministers meeting, held in Addis Ababa a month or so later. The Council imposed a deadline on the United Kingdom to crush the rebellion, failing which all the member states of the OAU threatened to sever diplomatic relations. It was also suggested that consideration be given by all member states to the possibility of using African force to assist the people of Zimbabwe. This caused the now comparatively elderly Hastings Banda to chuckle to himself. Later, over drinks, he remarked that ten Rhodesian soldiers could take on any African battalion currently in existence. Indeed, he added, if Smith commanded it, the Rhodesian Army could secure east and central Africa in a week.

This, although it went down very poorly, was nonetheless widely appreciated, and no military option was ever seriously discussed. The Rhodesians had proved in two world wars that they could scrap, and on a field of their own choosing, even the mighty British were wary of picking a fight. Gingerly, however, a squadron of RAF Javelins threaded its way south towards Zambia, to ease the mind of Kenneth Kaunda, who was convinced that the Rhodesians were about to invade his country. Because

Zambia still relied on Federal air traffic control, however, it was Salisbury that greeted the British pilots and guided them into Lusaka airport. Regular visits back and forth across the Zambezi culminated in several joyful Christmas and New Year's Eve parties, where Smith, as an RAF man himself, was warmly toasted. In was generally understood by both sides that any order to attack Rhodesia would be ignored.

Things in London, however, were not so comfortable. As the weeks passed, Harold Wilson felt no easing of the pressure. Having taken with a pinch of salt African threats to sever diplomatic relations, he was astonished when thirteen of their number did. Somalia, it was reported, borrowed a guide to British diplomatic procedure from the British Embassy in Mogadishu to familiarise itself with the process. That was not the end of it either. As Wilson addressed the General Assembly the following morning, twenty African delegates stood up and walked out. He paused in mid-sentence and watched in astonishment the silent exodus. What an ignominious record to set on behalf of the British Empire. In a moment or two, however, he gathered his composure and continued.

"Today we see some of our friends," said he, "passionate to intervene and unable to do so, directing their understandable anger not against Rhodesia but against Britain. All right, I understand that. But the British Government is not going to be deflected from the course that we are convinced is right, in which I believe the whole British people are behind us."

Very fair words. It is a British problem, and leave the British alone to deal with it. It also, however, happened to be an African problem, and Wilson stood in astonishment again as another wave of delegates stood up and filed out of the assembly.

These were desperate times, but nonetheless, Harold Wilson gave very little away. He agreed to expand the scope of sanctions to include a ban on the import of copper, chrome and asbestos, and to impose an embargo on fuel exports to Rhodesia. When it came, the fuel embargo caused the Rhodesian Government to sit up and take notice. Arrangements had been made, of course, but this was still punching a little below the belt. In the meanwhile, a two-day emergency Commonwealth conference was scheduled for January 1966. As the British Government hurried to prepare, it too was stopped in its tracks by the news that the meeting was to be held in Lagos, and not London. Never before had such a thing happened. The

Rhodesia crisis, of course, dominated the agenda, and once again calls were made for Britain to use force to end the rebellion. Wilson clung to his assurances that the rebellion would be over in weeks rather than months, but as weeks passed, and then months, his hopes began to fade.

However, it cannot be denied that Harold Wilson saved white Rhodesia. He carefully moderated sanctions to allow the rebel colony time to adapt. Did he do this intentionally? Historians have argued over that point ever since, and one must draw one's own inferences, but it is the opinion of this author that he probably did. He responded, however, more to the historical imperative of kith and kin than any particular love for white Rhodesia. For this did he receive any recognition or gratitude? History leaves us in no doubt about that, for he did not. He was the man that white Rhodesians most loved to hate, and forever more would they would jeer and gloat.

With the international community temporarily calmed, however, Smith and Wilson began to circle one another. Wilson jabbed first by freezing Rhodesian assets held in the United Kingdom, and the Rhodesians replied by suspending payment on all loans. This left Rhodesia flush with liquidity, and self-confident in the extreme. Edgar Whitehead, who had by then left Rhodesia and retired to England, wrote in an article published in the *Spectator*: "They have forgotten what they would have done to anybody in 1940 who suggested that they should give in to Hitler, because if not they would be subjected to sanctions and a shortage of petrol."

The Exchequer stopped payment to British pensioners living in Rhodesia, to which the Rhodesian Government responded by assuring Rhodesian pensioners living in Britain, Sir Edgar Whitehead among them, that they could expect their benefits to be honoured as usual. Britain cut off fuel supplies to Rhodesia, so Rhodesia cut off fuel supplies to Zambia, and before long plaintive cries from Lusaka were heard. The British Government was then compelled to deliver emergency fuel shipments via an air bridge between Lusaka and Dar es Salaam. The cost to the British taxpayer was 4,000 gallons of aviation fuel to airlift 2,500 gallons of petrol.

Readers may recall Ian Smith's visit to Lisbon after his unsuccessful first meeting with Wilson, and it was precisely the issue of fuel that he had on his mind. A long time ago, Cecil John Rhodes acknowledged to his board of directors that the great weakness in his scheme was that Rhodesia

was landlocked. He tried to repair this, but he failed, and he knew that one day it would come back to haunt the nation, and it did.

For the moment, however, Smith was able to secure a commitment from Salazar that a way could be found, and if there were international sanctions, well a way could still be found. The proviso, of course, would be money, but for the time being Smith did not venture there. Ken Flower, Director of the Central Intelligence Organization, would take care of those kinds of details.

Mozambique, however, was only relevant in terms of transit. For procurement and delivery, Smith looked no further than the old boy network. According to Liberal politician David Steel: "Those who shipped in oil were not hostile powers. They were British companies, backed by the British Foreign Office, with the connivance of British Cabinet Ministers, and the knowledge of the Prime Minister."

Yes indeed, that was the case. It was kith and kin, and it was good business too. British businessmen Tiny Rowland, chairman of the ubiquitous Lonrho (London/Rhodesia) Corporation, revealed that about sixty-per cent of all petroleum supplies reaching Rhodesia originated from Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum.

The first few months of the oil embargo, of course, were the most critical. Fuel rationing was introduced, and companies and individuals from all over southern Africa came to Rhodesia's aid. Random shipments from a variety of sources were vital in coping with the initial shock, and although old favours were called in, significant amounts of money changed hands too. Portuguese entrepreneur Jorge Jardim built a duty-free filling station a few miles east of the border town of Umtali and estimated that 300-tons of product a month was moved across the border into Rhodesia. Jardim and other Portuguese expatriates also owned and controlled the main *Sonarep* oil refinery outside Lourenço Marques, through which most of Rhodesia's fuel would be routed for the next few years, and they all made a great deal of money.

By the end of 1966, in the meanwhile, Rhodesia was listed as an official threat to world peace. The Royal Navy was tasked to mount a blockade of the coast of Mozambique, to prevent fuel destined for Rhodesia landing at the port of Beira. However, without guarantees from either Portugal and South Africa, it is hard to imagine what Wilson hoped to achieve much by this. The first two tankers carrying fuel for Rhodesia, the

Joanna V and the *Manuela*, appeared off the coast of Mozambique and docked in Beira with no interference whatsoever from the Royal Navy.

In the meanwhile, purpose-built receiving facilities for Rhodesian petrol were speedily built at the port of Beira to avoid implicating the Portuguese with any visible evidence of their assisting Rhodesia. However, the expense of constructing this tank farm was wasted when Jardim and his confederates pressured the Rhodesians *not* to take delivery of the *Joanna V* and *Manuela* cargoes. Ostensibly the reason was to again avoid compromising the Portuguese, but actually, it was to divert the business back to the Sonarep refinery. Jardim owned a controlling interest in this plant and stood to make a fortune, which he did. In fairness, it was also true that the same fuel could easily be consigned to South Africa from this depot before being redirected to Rhodesia. This was ultimately what happened, but after some months of streamlining, this particular wheel of the sanctions-busting machine spun without a hitch. In due course, fuel rationing in Rhodesia was relaxed, and eventually, it disappeared altogether.

And so it continued. Despite international sanctions, Rhodesia remained open for business on just about every front. Such vital strategic exports as chrome and tobacco adjusted to the changing climate better than anyone could have hoped. To the average white man in the street, the disappearance of imported whisky and chocolate, and a scarcity of certain spare parts seemed to be the only noticeable effects. It became a matter of pride to refuse Scotch whisky, and anything else from the United Kingdom, even when it was available. In some respects, sanctions proved to be positive, stimulating a rapid diversification of industrial production and an equally rapid expansion of Rhodesia's manufacturing base. The commercial sector adapted easily to covert business, and a great many adventurous entrepreneurs made quick and easy fortunes. Generally, the economy continued to be buoyant, and morale remained high.

Soon sanctions busting became a way of life. Swazi veterinary documents, for example, were attached to Rhodesian beef bound for black African markets. Chrome destined for the United States was routed through South Africa where it acquired a different identity. Numerous Rhodesian business 'headquarters' opened overseas, and indeed, the South African Bantustans proved an easy mark. Some Gulf and Arab countries, Oman in particular, were very cooperative, thanks, perhaps to their traditional dislike of black Africans. Rhodesia was a reliable trading partner, and her terms of

trade were favourable. Old friends and business links were camouflaged and kept mobile. For all intents and purposes, Rhodesia was limited in her international trade only by what she could physically import and export. For a few, it was a thrilling subterfuge, and for the majority business as usual, and plenty of it.

Despite sanctions, some countries were still quite willing to trade openly with white Rhodesia. The French, for example, at least for a while, ignored sanctions altogether, and thanks to the significant number of Italians and Greeks in Rhodesia, all involved in one way or another with trade, both of those nations contributed openly to Rhodesia's economic survival. The Portuguese, of course, held the line thanks to the interdependence of the Mozambican and Rhodesian economies, and the fact that President Salazar was determined to see anti-colonialism fail in southern Africa.

Jack Malloch, the legendary fighter ace and comrade-in-arms of Ian Smith, was the Boy's Own hero, who treated sanctions-busting as a huge lark. Apart from the routine distribution of Rhodesian beef and fresh produce around Africa, he worked covertly on behalf of the government, and indeed, on behalf of quite a few governments. After WWII, he scraped together enough money to buy a handful of surplus military aircraft, and in 1964 formed the semi-commercial, semi-official airfreight company Air Trans Africa, with undisclosed help from the Central Intelligence Organization. The principal object of the company was, of course, to bust sanctions, but thanks to Malloch's extraordinary network of connections all over Africa, and indeed all over the world, he was also an intelligence handler's dream.

Air Trans Africa operated Lockheed Super Constellations, Douglas DC-4s and DC-7s. Historian Peter Stiff, who knew Malloch personally, remembers: "He went where the money was and where nobody was competing for cargoes, he flew for the Belgians in the Congo, gladly assisted the French in central and west Africa, the Portuguese in Angola, the CIA wherever and the British MI-6 in Sudan and other Arab countries."

Most notably Malloch became a lifeline for the besieged government of independent Biafra, a state in the Nigerian Federation that fought a bitter secessionist war from 1967 to 1970. Soon after the outbreak of this conflict, the Rhodesian CIO opened an air bridge between Libreville in Gabon and Uli in Biafra. South Africa provided logistical support and

military training to the government of Biafra, also using Jack Malloch's aircraft for transport in and out.

A curiosity of the Biafran crisis was that both the breakaway republic and Nigeria itself were financing the war with the same currency. As a tactic, the Nigerian Central Bank withdrew and replaced existing banknotes, which, of course, rendered Biafran reserves worthless overnight. Every available aircraft was then stuffed with paper money for shipment to Switzerland, where it was exchanged at a discount on international currency markets. A new Biafran currency was minted and, on behalf of the CIO, Malloch was contracted to fly it in. However, during a routine fuel stop in Lomé, the Togolese capital, Malloch's aircraft was impounded, the banknotes confiscated and the crew arrested. For the next five months, Malloch was held in a fetid Togolese prison while the CIO, with the help of the French, negotiated his release. Having lost his aircraft, however, Malloch flew under cover of darkness into an unamed black country where he stole a DC-7 that he knew was parked regularly at the far end of an airstrip.

In this way, Malloch acquired new aircraft to replace the many that disappeared, burned on the tarmac or rendered politically or mechanically inoperable. The acquisition of replacement aircraft was in itself a triumph of sanctions busting. Malloch freely spent CIO funds, equally freely given, to keep the intelligence and sanctions-busting operations moving at full capacity.

Jack Malloch's love of classic aviation brought him back to his roots when he recovered a Spitfire mounted on a plinth outside New Sarum airbase in Salisbury, and in due course completely restored it. One day in March of 1982, Malloch disappeared in his restored Spitfire, and after some time he was discovered dead in the wreckage. If his service in 273 Rhodesia Squadron of the RAF during World War II can be said to be the beginning, then surely dying behind the controls of a classic World War II fighter aircraft was as appropriate an end as any man of action could ever hope for.

2
The Bush War

Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war –
Haile Selassie

As the reality of UDI settled in, the nationalist leadership on both sides remained in detention. Observing the generally impotent international reaction and the ease with which Rhodesia surmounted sanction must have been very depressing. At the very least it confirmed that the combined nationalist movement now had a fight on its hands, but at worse it meant an indefinite jail term for most. Several directives were therefore issued to the exiled leadership concerning the future conduct of the armed struggle. The most important of these was ZANU's 'Sikombela Declaration' which authorised exiled leader Herbert Chitepo to establish a dedicated war council, to be known as the *Dare re Chimurenga*. The responsibility of the 'Dare' was to coordinate the armed struggle through a revolutionary council, and a guerrilla army. It will also be remembered that two years earlier, James Chikerema was similarly appointed by ZAPU as head of 'Special Affairs', which echoed the proposed functions of the ZANU Dare.

In many respects, ZANU was at a disadvantage because the Frontline leadership, in particular, Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere, decried the existence of the party as a splinter group guilty of dividing an otherwise united movement. It was therefore only with considerable difficulty that Chitepo was able to raise the necessary funds to source weapons, and establish training facilities. Chitepo, interestingly enough, served briefly as the first Director of Public Prosecutions in independent Tanganyika and remained well connected in that country. It was through these connections that he was able to secure training facilities at Intumbi Reefs, a disused goldmine not far from Mbeya. There William Ndangana and Felix Santana, the two survivors of the Crocodile Gang, and both relatively salted veterans by then, commenced training an initial intake of twenty-four men.

Unfortunately, a few devils of old followed the intake to Intumbi, for within the group were Rhodesian agents, which effectively meant that every recruit, even before laying hands on a weapon, was as good as dead.

Nonetheless, in April 1966, after very superficial training, they were secreted across the Zambezi River and infiltrated into Rhodesia with orders to make their way inland to Sinoia. There they were to split up into separate attack groups and proceed in-country on various missions. The first group, tasked with destroying the Feruka Oil Refinery, on the outskirts of Umtali, was tracked and arrested before it came anywhere near its target. The second group set off towards Fort Victoria, but it was also accounted for almost immediately. The third, however, remained at large by integrating into the local community in the Zvimba area northwest of Salisbury. The fourth, calling itself the 'Armageddon Group', made camp on a large commercial farm in the Sinoia area owned by Noel Edwards.

According to intelligence chief Ken Flower, the fourth group was under Special Branch observation, and notwithstanding a perfunctory attack on a police station, and an even weaker attempt to disrupt the national power supply, it represented no particular threat. Flower argued, therefore, that little was to be gained by making martyrs of the men, particularly since intelligence gathering tended to count for more than operational kills. However, information reached Special Branch that, after a meeting with ZANU contact men who were due to drive up from Salisbury on 27 April, the group would mount its first planned attack against a white farmstead. This, of course, added a note of urgency to the matter.

There was then, apparently, some disagreement within the Operations Coordinating Committee, and in his memoir, *Serving Secretly*, Ken Flower implied that the Commissioner of Police, Frank 'Slash' Barfoot, made the case that the BSAP, acting alone, was the agency best suited to handle the situation. Barfoot was anxious to be seen as actively complying with the Government's demand for 'the toughest possible action against guerrillas'. The British South Africa Police was, of course, the senior regiment in Rhodesia, and it naturally wished to do justice to its traditional role as the first line of defence. Chief Superintendent John Cannon, however, then Member-in-Charge BSAP Lomagundi District, the area under which the incident fell, urged Barfoot to invite the army to conduct the operation. The police, it was argued, were at that time poorly armed relative to the insurgents, and this was undoubtedly a military matter. This was overruled, however, because the group were law-breakers, and it was the duty of the police, and police reservists, to arrest or kill them.

In the event, helicopters were deployed by the Air Force, and an air-supported ground operation, conducted chiefly by police regulars and reservists, accounted relatively easily for all seven gang members. More difficult to handle, however, were the political ramifications that followed. An Operations Coordinating Committee meeting held immediately after the operation was tense and combative, with accusations and counter-accusations of bad faith. It was eventually agreed, however, that any incidents drifting beyond the jurisdiction of a single service would be dealt with by the combined operations of all arms of the Security Forces. This brought into existence the concept of a Joint Operational Command (Centre), or JOC, the security structure under which the war would be fought from that point on.

From the nationalist point of view, the incident was both a tragedy and a godsend. The group of seven died with undoubted courage, and as Flower had predicted, earning the tributes of their comrades, leaders and the general black public. Even Flower conceded that the nationalists had learnt the necessary lessons with great courage and commitment, noting that guerrillas continued to penetrate the country knowing full well that most of those who had preceded them had been killed or captured. As a consequence, the 'battle', such as it was, was granted a depth of significance by the nationalist movement that far exceeded its merits as a military operation, and it was fully exploited for its obvious propaganda value. The 'Battle of Sinoia', of course, provided the first crop of martyrs to found a war mythology, but most importantly, it allowed ZANU to claim first blood vis-à-vis ZAPU in the shooting war. The day, 28 April, is now celebrated annually as 'Chimurenga Day', and in ZANU history it remains the official start date of the 'Liberation Struggle', or the 'Second Chimurenga'.

One group of guerrillas, however, remained at large, and on 18 May 1966, it appeared on Nevada Farm, a property owned by a certain Johannes Viljoen. Responding to a loud knock on his front door, Viljoen was confronted by a group of armed men. His wife joined him on the veranda, and after a brief harangue, the two were shot dead. The couple's young son crawled into a cupboard and survived. The extensive counter-insurgency operation that followed lasted through most of 1966, and in due course, all members of the gang were either killed or taken into custody.

At about the same time as the Nevada Farm incident, another ZANU incursion was noted that once again highlighted not only the astonishing Rhodesian intelligence capability but also the enormous courage of those early insurgents. Four guerrillas hidden in the back of a removal van travelling from Lusaka to Salisbury were intercepted by a Special Branch patrol. A combined force of Rhodesian SAS and Special Branch operatives stood ready as the vehicle was waved down. Once the exits were surrounded, the attackers hidden inside were given a chance to surrender. They initially gave the impression that they would, but suddenly weapons appeared, and they opened fire. Moments later they were cut to pieces in a brief hail of return gunfire.

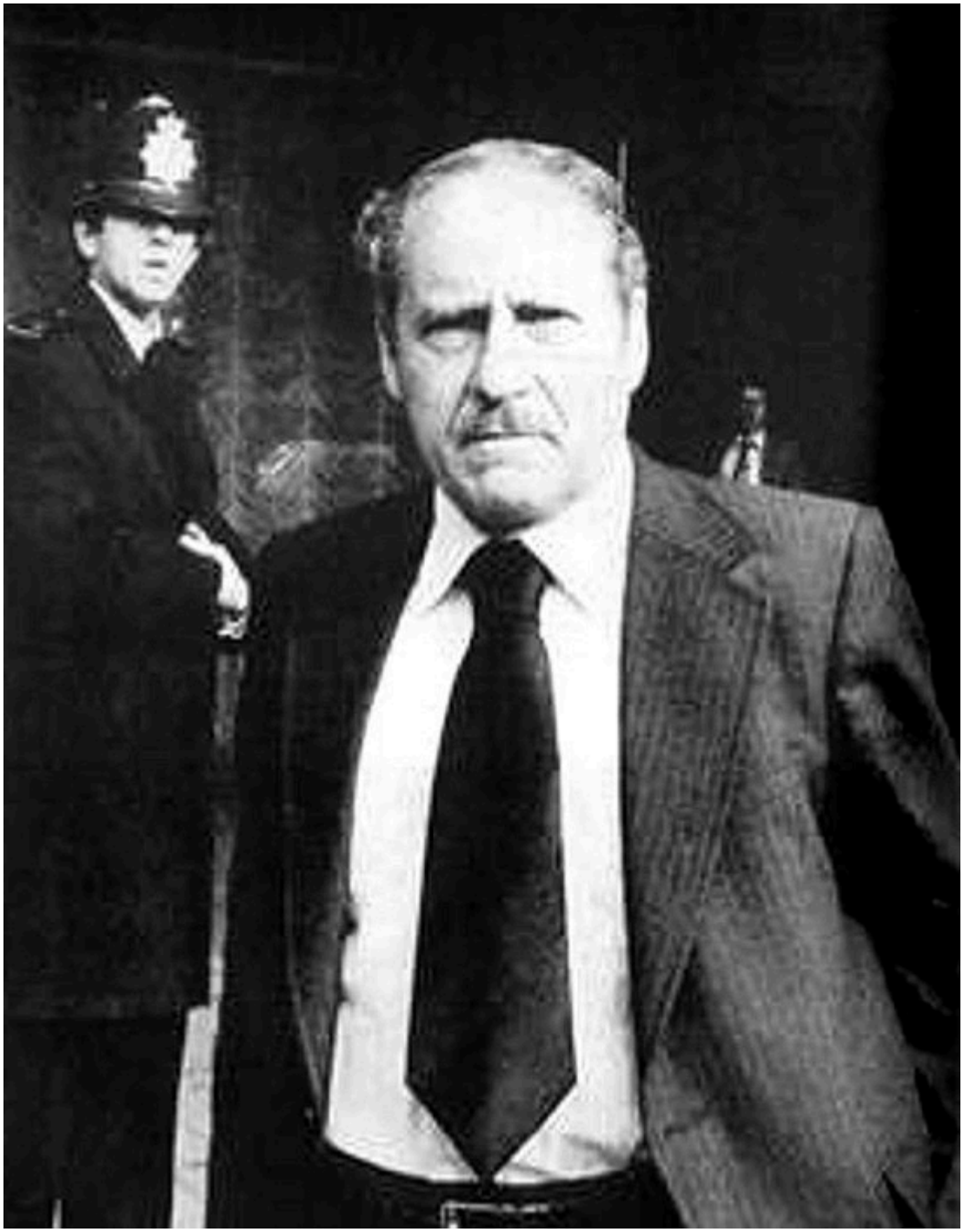
These were primarily ZANU operations, but soon enough, ZAPU was in the field too. Between July and August 1966, a total of five separate ZAPU groups crossed the Zambezi River into Rhodesia at various points. They carried with them orders to make for specific Tribal Trust Lands, where they were to set up bases to recruit and train locals. Again their activities were monitored from the onset by local intelligence, and with the exception of one group of eight, who were arrested some months later, all were accounted for relatively quickly.

It is perhaps worth noting that guerrilla activity was not confined exclusively to blacks, for there were incidents on record of white assistance or participation in quite a few attacks. Perhaps the most interesting was that involving the mixed race couple of Patrick Matimba and his Dutch-born wife, Adriana. In August 1966, the couple rented a suburban house in Salisbury, with Adriana Matimba posing as a middle-class woman and Patrick as her chauffeur. In due course, Adriana checked into five separate city centre hotels, in each of which she planted a crude incendiary device. There was some damage to the rooms, but nothing that threatened life or the structure of the buildings. After this, the two slipped across the border into Zambia where Patrick went on to make a more productive contribution to the struggle, and Adriana settled into motherhood.

The closing months of the 1960s, however, inevitably saw the morale of those early guerrilla units whittled down. With their leaders imprisoned and their forces in tatters, the two political parties were forced to acknowledge a crushing lack of success. As a consequence, both withdrew their forces from the field and stepped back to reimagine their respective tactics. This in due course resulted in a radical revision of their

common approach to the war, but for the time being, it did tend to lend the impression that they were defeated.

In fact, nothing could have been further from the truth, and it was Herbert Chitepo who put the matter in some perspective. On a flight between Tanzania and Zambia, he was interviewed by a Danish journalist, and the subsequent printed report quoted him thus: “It is useless to engage in conventional warfare with well equipped Rhodesian and South African troops along the Zambezi River.” Words truer were never spoken, and conventional warfare was indeed from then on a thing of the past. While the nationalist factions retreated to consider alternatives, however, much was taking place in the theatre of white nationalist politics.



Ken Flower, Director General of the CIO

3
The British Ship of State

I think I can save the British Empire from anything – except the British
– **Winston Churchill**

Harold Wilson fought a second general election at the end of May 1966 and was returned to power with a somewhat improved majority. This eased much of his early uncertainty, and now it was time to wash the spit off his jacket and take more direct control over the Rhodesian crisis. Kenneth Kaunda took note of this, and assured his colleges in the Organization of African Unity: "Now you will see. Harold Wilson will do the right thing." Indeed, Harold Wilson certainly intend to try, it just so happened that it was not quite the right thing that Kenneth Kaunda had in mind.

The first peace envoys to warily wend their way to Salisbury in the aftermath of UDI were sent by the Conservative Party. Reginald Maudling, the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer and ex-Secretary of the State for the Colonies, presented the Conservative position on Rhodesia, and a very intelligent and well-observed position it was. Economic sanctions, he said, could not work without the active commitment of South Africa. This indeed was the fly in the ointment of Harold Wilson's strategy, and there was no sign of any immediate South African plans to pull the plug on Rhodesia.

Then, in February 1966, former Lord Privy Seal Selwyn Lloyd landed in Salisbury on a fact-finding mission. After finding some facts, he reached the conclusion that the crisis was solvable, and that grounds existed for the British Government to consider opening negotiations with the rebels. Hesitant contacts were established through the civil services of both countries, as behind the scenes 'talks about talks' gradually took shape. These contacts continued through 1966 as a way was sought, as Smith put it, to find a peg upon which Wilson could hang his climb down. Not least of these, of course, was Wilson's oft-repeated pledge that he would never negotiate with an illegal regime. This begged the question of who he was then to talk to, and mercifully, Humphrey Gibbs was still holding the fort, so it was through him that the first high-level contacts were initiated.

The talks about talks were suspended briefly to accommodate the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference held that year in Lusaka. The

opportunity, however, was nonetheless taken for an undersecretary in the Commonwealth Office, Sir Morris James, to call on Gibbs, and make it known that the Labour Government was now determined to resolve the crisis through negotiation. The Governor passed this cautiously welcomed news on to the rebel administration.

On 19 September 1966, Commonwealth Secretary Herbert Bowen made an appearance in Salisbury, travelling in the company of Attorney General for England and Wales, Elwyn Jones, to set the stage for formal negotiations. Talks were held, but an acceptable compromise remained elusive. Broad agreement was reached over a timescale, and the general terms of majority rule, but the question of a return to legality, and what 'legality' meant, remained an obstacle. The British insisted that the current Rhodesian parliament be dissolved and a governor appointed by the British take over control. This would be followed by the stationing of British troops in the colony to maintain law and order. However, since the Rhodesian Government could discern no failing either of law and order or their execution of government, both conditions were rejected.

It was the perception of Smith, his cabinet and a majority of the white citizens of Rhodesia that UDI had so far been a success and, despite sanctions, the country was building economic muscle. It was generally felt that Britain, and Wilson in particular, needed a negotiated settlement more than Rhodesia did. However, obviously in no hurry to help Wilson out of his dilemma, Smith simply sat on his hands. Parallel to this, an incident occurred that was so utterly unnecessary and so ill-conceived that it is surprising any kind of contact between the two governments survived.

Armistice Day 1966 coincided with the first anniversary of Rhodesia's independence. The day was as usual commemorated at the cenotaph in London, but on this occasion, a ban was placed on any official Rhodesian participation. Whatever animosity might have existed between the two governments, there was no call for this. It was, of course, vintage Harold Wilson, and his fingerprints were all the order. No well-meaning British person, imbued with British tradition, would likely have sanctioned such a thing. Rhodesians, both black and white, stood beside Britain in two world wars and supported Britain in many numerous other conflicts and disturbances. Rhodesia's right, therefore, to both attend the ceremony, and indeed to participate, was inviolable.

However, the Anglo-Rhodesian Society organised its own wreath-laying ceremony later that afternoon, with a Salvation Army band providing the martial music. Messages of sorrow and condolences were received from numerous individuals informally representing regimental associations, and the only notes of celebration were uttered by various left-wing councils and radical student organisations. This, in many respects, was a turning point. There were many Britons, previously on the fence, who came out in support of Rhodesia, and many white Rhodesians, also on the fence, who did likewise.

Apparently oblivious to it all, Harold Wilson busied himself planning his next encounter with Smith. The British Prime Minister appeared quite confident that any unresolved questions could be bridged by his not inconsiderable powers of diplomacy. His choice of venue was a warship anchored at the British enclave of Gibraltar. Winston Churchill might have used a similar tactic to impress a victim in the days of empire, but Smith was hardly that type of victim, and Harold Wilson was not Churchill. The invitation was issued through Sir Humphrey Gibbs and Sir Hugh Beadle, to give it all some appearance of regularity.

Despite all of this, however, Wilson was under no illusion as to who he was dealing with. As the Rhodesian delegation was piped on board HMS *Tiger,* he gave Beadle and Gibbs the nod but gravitated immediately towards Smith. Taking his illegal counterpart aside, he urged him to be aware of the seriousness of the current situation, adding that clarity of mind and maturity at this moment were vital for the future of Rhodesia. This, of course, immediately put Smith on the defensive. Prickly at best, he tartly reminded Wilson that, unlike his own stake in the affair, Smith was a Rhodesian, a patriot and a landowner, and as such he had more reason than anyone on board to be aware of the seriousness of the current situation.

Smith, of course, was entirely at home in these surroundings, and more comfortable in the company of Royal Navy officers than the bookish Prime Minister. Wilson served as a civilian in the supply department throughout the war and had absolutely nothing in common with men of the uniformed services. Smith, on the other hand, was warmly received by the ship's officers and invited that evening to the wardroom for drinks. There he was toasted with assurances that, with the possible exception of one man, who could be tossed overboard with no particular loss to the kingdom, support for Rhodesia on board ship was absolute.

Thus the tone of the next few days was set, and while the HMS *Tiger* slipped anchor, and steamed out of the harbour, the two parties searched for a solution to the Gordian knot. The stumbling block, of course, remained the question of a return to legality. Wilson insisted that power be returned to the Governor, who would then form a new, 'broad-based' government. The word 'broad-based' quite naturally alerted Smith, and since Wilson was vague on what it might mean in practice, it was pushed temporarily to one side. Smith then suggested a constitutional solution whereby the British and Rhodesian parliaments legislate simultaneously. This was a rather an unlikely proposition, for, as Wilson remained his counterpart, the British Government could not deal overtly with an illegitimate government. Smith's reminder that he was dealing with the Rhodesian Government at that moment was taken for that it was and ignored. Wilson then pleaded the difficulties that he was facing at the UN and the Commonwealth, to which Smith replied that these were problems of his own making. In due course, the discussions broke up in some acrimony, with no advance to report.

Black reaction to the HMS *Tiger* negotiations was, of course, predictably hostile. Between October and November of that year, a series of OAU meetings resulted in yet more fulminating condemnation of Britain. The announcement was made that the member states "bitterly and unreservedly" deplored the Anglo-Rhodesian talks. These they condemned as "a conspiracy aimed at recognising the independence seized illegally by the rebel settlers." However, while Smith and Wilson butted heads in the Mediterranean, and black nations gathered to demonstrate their unremitting rage, a minor tragedy unfolded in Salisbury Remand Prison.

Sometime toward the end of the year, Robert Mugabe was visited in prison by his sister Sabina, who brought the news that his young son, Nhamodzenyika, died of a severe bout of cerebral malaria at the home of his father-in-law. Mugabe was devastated, and immediately drafted a request for temporary release to travel to Ghana and bury his son.

According to Inspector Tony Bradshaw of Special Branch, with whom Mugabe shared a collegiate, but at time difficult relationship, Mugabe was grief-stricken', and remained inconsolable for days. In support of Mugabe's application, Bradshaw expressed confidence that Mugabe would honour any undertaking he made to return to detention. About this, he was very probably right, and he also no doubt sensed that a gesture along

those lines would blunt the edges of Mugabe's almost pathological disdain for whites. It was a long shot, however, and unsurprisingly, the request was denied.

In the meanwhile, Sally Mugabe, now with no particular reason to confine herself to home, travelled from Ghana to Britain, seeking the solace of activism and study. A picture is often painted of this colourful woman, as iron-spirited as her husband, cast up lonely and isolated on cold foreign shores. She won a scholarship to study secretarial science in London and did so initially with special permission from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, in due course, Home Secretary Mervin Reese divined that her marriage to Mugabe gave her no claim to Rhodesian citizenship and therefore no claim to British protection. She was subsequently ordered to leave the country. In her remaining time, she spent long hours bent over volumes in the British Library reproducing in her own handwriting texts, quotes and references that Mugabe needed in his prison cell some 5,000 miles away.

Education was also the solace and cornerstone of Mugabe's prison regimen. In total, he accumulated seven university degrees while in various prisons and detention centres, and he also insisted on education programmes for all the ZANU nationalists incarcerated with him. Few achieved quite what he did but some, like Maurice Nyagumbo, advanced their education quite significantly, certainly more than they ever would have on the outside. More significantly, they were given a rigid political education by Mugabe himself, who administered the lessons as he learned them.

It was by these methods that Mugabe succeeded in maintaining, not only his own equilibrium but to a great extent the mental stability of his comrades. It is worth remembering that Mugabe was not in any actual position of leadership at this time, because Ndabaningi Sithole remained president of ZANU. Despite this, an examination of the testimonials of many nationalists who were in prison with Mugabe reveals that it tended to be to him they turned for guidance. Of his education, Mugabe himself remarked with double-edged humility: "I do it for myself and Zimbabwe because I know one day we both will need these degrees."

Mugabe's future deputy, Simon Muzenda, the subject of a biography by Zimbabwean historian and writer Ngwabi Bhebe, describes a fight that took place in the communal area of Salisbury Remand Prison.

> [Edgar]Tekere stood up and kicked [Enos] Nkala, who was sitting down, in the ribs. Some of us tried to stop the fight from breaking out. But Mugabe thought the two had been at each other verbally for too long. He, therefore, persuaded us to leave them alone so they could fight it out. They boxed each other to exhaustion. The guards who might have stopped the fight were nowhere to be seen. By the time the guards appeared they had really messed up each other, and Tekere's face was swollen completely. In fact, Tekere had been knocked to the ground about two or three times. Nkala was the far better boxer of the two. The last time he rose from being floored Tekere retired from the fight and went to sit quietly by himself. When Nkala challenged him to continue the fight, he refused. Mugabe said, 'If you leave people to fight it out, they release their anger completely.'

Another story, this time lifted from *Drum* magazine, reveals the no-less dreary fate of ZAPU President Joshua Nkomo. Nkomo was also interned with the core of his executive, but he sojourned relatively quietly, leading no selfless charges towards the accumulation of knowledge.

> At a recent chief's indaba on the future of Rhodesia, one man spoke of a place where the body of a poisonous snake was buried. It was dangerous to go near that place, he said. The 'snake' he referred to was nationalism, and the place was Gonakudzingwa in the Sengwe area. Here waits banned leader Joshua Nkomo now facing four years restriction.

Conditions in restriction camps such as Gonakudzingwa and Sikombela were primitive and uncomfortable, but not overly confining. Restrictees were usually dumped in very isolated locations, given basic rations and left with the materials to construct their own accommodation. The compounds were unguarded most of the time, with police visiting only once a week to conduct a roll call and bring fresh rations. The restricted men were technically limited to a defined perimeter, although in practice they were free to move around the district at will.

This lack of close surveillance was probably a mistake, as was confining the leadership of the different parties together. Each executive had ample opportunity to continue the business of planning and executing

the struggle. Separation of the leadership only happened when certain of them were convicted of offences under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, upon which the offenders were usually required to serve prison terms in Salisbury or Gwelo. Besides this, the leadership remained in a position to make reasonably easy contact with one another, and with others on the outside.

Gonakudzingwa was very remote, and the ZAPU leadership was probably more effectively isolated than ZANU at Sikombela. At the end of 1964, *Drum* magazine spent a weekend at Gonakudzingwa and found Nkomo inactive and morbidly depressed in the heat. A handful of women were attached to the camp, and it was these that undertook most of the labour, so for the men, there was very little to do. Accommodation consisted mostly of tin huts that were either too hot or too cold, while the landscape of drab lowveld woodland and scrub stretched unbroken into the blue distance. Nkomo spent his days seated in the shade of a tree with his transistor radio and a pair of binoculars beside him. He listened to the news, watched elephants browse in the distance or an occasional lion also seeking shade. Nkomo, although a few shades darker, appeared not to have lost any weight. Historian Peter Stiff recalls rumours regarding the tendency on the part of the authorities to overfeed him in the hope that he would suffer a heart attack. Nkomo later recalled tablets given to him by his doctor to help him lose weight that kept him awake at night. He spent much of his time alone, fingering a volume of Samuelson's *Economics* and drinking from a bottomless bucket of brewing tea.

"So we sing." Remarked Joseph Msika, fellow restrictee, and PCC Secretary for External Affairs. "Don't be baffled that we are singing when we should be sobbing. We sing our sorrows out. Go anywhere in Africa where people are in sadness, and see them sing their sorrows out."

There indeed was much to be sorry about. *Drum* was soon to be banned, along with books, pamphlets, newspapers and all other avenues of nationalist expression. The leaders were in detention, police informers were everywhere, and freedom fighters were falling like dominoes. *Drum* had this to say before it temporarily closed the book on Rhodesia.

> The Government had gone about its business well. The nationalist movement that could once raise a 20,000 crowd with a whisper, was long since split within itself and since its leaders had been carried

away to distant restriction, informers seemed to abound. Fervent revolutionaries who took trips to foreign guerrilla warfare training centres in Ghana, East Africa, even China got back only to walk into the arms of waiting security police.

4
HMS *Fearless*

I would say colonialism is a wonderful thing. It spread civilization to Africa. Before it they had no written language, no wheel as we know it, no schools, no hospitals, not even normal clothing – **Ian Smith**

Once back in Salisbury, Smith briefed his cabinet colleagues on events aboard HMS *Tiger*. Before a final decision could be made on whether to accept the proposals or not, he required a unanimous endorsement, and to give them all an extra hour or two to think things over, he scheduled the vote for the afternoon session, upon which everyone went home for lunch.

In the morning, political pundits would have called a clear majority in favour, but by afternoon the mood had changed. A vote was held, and a negative result was returned, and with that, the *Tiger* proposals quietly slipped off the table. Analysts, however, and at that time everyone was an analyst, gathered around bars and watering holes and were intrigued by rumours that Janet Smith was behind a lunchtime revolt. Friends of the Smiths usually found Janet to be the hardliner, and legend has it that over lunch she contacted all the cabinet wives and orchestrated a rebellion.

The truth was probably more prosaic. Harold Wilson could not be held entirely over a barrel, and negotiation without compromise is hardly a negotiation. The HMS *Tiger* proposals were not unreasonable, and Ken Flower for one believed that Smith appeared strongest when he was saying ‘no’. He would say ‘no’ not so much because it was the correct response, but because he was afraid of being proved if he said ‘yes’. No was simply safer. According to Flower, Smith’s method of negotiation was not to negotiate at all, and if any accommodation was possible, it was typically left entirely to the other side. While this was not invariably the case, Smith certainly squandered many opportunities by a combination of uncertainty, tenacity and an inability to horse-trade in the universally accepted political tradition.

Smith would soon be forced to make concessions, and many of them, but for the time being he was under no particular pressure to do so. No doubt this also contributed to the hiatus. By the end of 1966, any white resistance to UDI had mostly evaporated and Rhodesians, in the time-honoured British tradition, were knuckling down and getting on with it.

Smith could instinctively sense that with the dust settled, his grip on the hearts and minds of white Rhodesia was firm.

But by then things were getting serious. The killing of Oberholzer and the Viljoens brought it home to whites that they were facing a direct physical threat. As bungling as the guerrilla war had been so far, it was war nonetheless. However, the combination of a common enemy, clannishness and high morale created a strong bond among white Rhodesians, and not to support Smith implied support for Wilson, and no one cared to be guilty of that. For a long time, Smith was able to use this solidarity to paper over a general political stagnation, while whites, anxious about their future, were only too happy to rally behind a strong and determined leader.

And however well things seemed to be going, there was always much to be anxious about. Two years after UDI and Rhodesia remained in political isolation. No nation in the world had yet made any serious move towards recognition. There was some discussion regarding the establishment of a republic, and although Smith did not discourage this talk, in February 1967 he appointed a commission under Salisbury lawyer Sam Whaley to consider a new constitutional framework. The door to negotiations with Britain, he said, was now fully slammed and locked.

It may have seemed that way at the time, but Rhodesia could not exist forever as a political outcast, and something had to change. While he publicly confirmed his determination to never surrender, Smith was nonetheless not immune to the occasional jitters, and the *Tiger* proposals were never entirely discarded. Perhaps the wives were never told, but quietly the outlines of Wilson's *Tiger* proposals reappeared on the table, where they remained, at least for the time being, as a basis for future negotiations.

The first signs of renewed contact between the British and Rhodesian Governments came with a visit to Rhodesia in mid-1967 by Lord Alport. Alport, the former British High Commissioner to the Federation, held meetings at different times with both Ian Smith and Humphrey Gibbs, and after three weeks returned to Britain to report mixed results. His broad conclusion was that perhaps *some* progress was possible, and on this thin margin, Wilson authorised Gibbs to begin preparatory talks with Smith. Smith remained tight-lipped, and publicly somewhat indifferent, but he peered through a door ajar and was relieved to see Wilson were still there.

Smith had recently returned from a holiday in South Africa, where he had for the first time met South African Prime Minister John Vorster. Smith generally had a very narrow field of vision when it came to people whom he did or did not like. Most of his diplomacy over the UDI crisis tended to fall into the latter category, and besides that, UDI was such an emotive issue for him that he simply could not absorb anything other than praise for it. Vorster, unfortunately, had little praise to offer, so he did not qualify as a friend.

However, events were underway that would force an increase in security cooperation between the two, whether Smith cared to ask for it or not, or indeed, whether Vorster cared to offer it or not. In 1967, ZAPU entered into a temporary military alliance with the South African ANC. This was mainly to allow ZAPU to assist a large number of trained *Umkonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation – the armed wing of the ANC) cadres to move through Rhodesia on their way to South Africa. The benefits of such an alliance, however, were not easily understood by the rival organisations of both groups. The South African ANC was counselled to wage its own war at home and give no excuse to South Africa to deploy forces into Rhodesia.

Time and again, however, ZAPU functionaries and historians have tried to drive home the point that South African force was already deployed in Rhodesia before this, and that the strategic alliance between the two revolutionary movements did not bring the fact about. There is no tangible evidence of this having been the case, and there can be little doubt that the actions of ZAPU and MK in this regard were instrumental in the deployment of South African armed police units to Rhodesia.

Meanwhile, during July of 1967, a combined force of 200 combatants of ZAPU's military wing and MK crossed the Zambezi River above the Victoria Falls, and from there sought to establish a route south through the Wankie National Park. Once again, it was not long before their presence was detected by vigilant game control staff, and throughout August the first of the dramatic Combined Operations involving all the Rhodesian security services played out.

Operation *Nickel* was a ruthless and bloody affair that pitted the seasoned Rhodesian Security Forces against a newly inspired, well-trained and determined enemy. After resorting to air power to finish the job, the Rhodesians were sobered to tally seven of their men dead and thirteen wounded. For this, they could claim a mere thirty ZAPU dead. In spite of

these unacceptably high Rhodesian casualties, Operation *Nickel* stopped the incursion firmly in its tracks and was marked down as a successful operation.

It was after this operation, however, that the offer of South African security assistance was made via the CIO. Smith quickly accepted it in the face of unexpected resistance from his own hardliners, who were convinced that the country could, and should go it alone. The offer, however, was made as a result of pressure from the South African military and ran somewhat contrary to Vorster's better judgement. But it was an opportunity, and Smith was not immune to the political value of a security relationship with South Africa. Soon after that a detachment of 2,000 South African Police members, posing as riot police, arrived in Rhodesia, supported by a small squadron of SAAF helicopters.

The obliteration of their first significant incursion, in the meanwhile, did not immediately put paid to ZAPU's alliance with the South African ANC. As an eventful year drew to a close, the two combined forces once again in a more conventional operation, with the initial objective merely being to lay supply lines into Rhodesia. It was hoped that this would allow an attack force in the Zambezi Valley to remain undetected long enough for them to find a way up the escarpment and into suitable cover on the highveld.

This effort, however, proved no more successful than previous. A patrolling game ranger by the name of David Scammel detected signs of human movement in the Zambezi Valley almost at the moment that the operation began. Scammel noticed an unusual pattern of game movement in his patrol area caused by a handful of insurgents shooting for the pot. Their progress through the valley was also confirmed by spoor, showing the unique figure-of-eight tread of their Cuban-manufactured boots. The army was alerted, and the general location of the group quickly established. Rapid mobilisation of army and police units was coordinated, and an extensive operation codenamed *Cauldron* swung into action. Operation *Cauldron* saw a series of running battles during March and April 1968, culminating in the death of sixty-nine guerrillas and the capture of fifty, for the loss of six members of the Rhodesian Security Forces.

The next major action took place in September 1968, and although accounts differ as to the strength of the attacking force, upwards of ninety 'Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army', or ZIPRA cadres crossed the

Zambezi River at widely separated points. ZIPRA, formed in 1964, was the armed wing of ZAPU. This formation was presumably sent to test Security Force ground coverage, but within hours of a successful crossing, at least one member hived off and made his way to Chirundu Police post. There he reported to the local police inspector that he was an undercover Special Branch agent. Trackers then located the insurgents and an operation codenamed *Griffin* quickly accounted for the entire group. One South African police constable was killed and thirty-nine guerrillas, with forty-one, captured.

Rhodesia was by then entirely dependent on her neighbours, and it was worrying to note that as ground was lost in the Mozambique civil war, so metropolitan Portuguese commitment seemed to wane. As the 1960s drew to an end, Rhodesia found itself almost entirely reliant on South African balance of payments support, arms and military cooperation. This was not a comfortable situation, and even though in strategic terms, Rhodesia's survival provided a buffer for South Africa against her own enemies, South African support was never absolute and could not be relied on. Vorster and Smith did not care for one another, and this played out frequently. Although the minutes of their first meeting were never made public, on his return to Rhodesia, Smith was depressed. For years afterwards, he would grumble about Vorster's unwillingness to throw his weight behind Rhodesia. One of his favourite 'obsessional aversions' became Vorster and South Africa, the former in particular.

Smith, in the meanwhile, clung to the position that, while he was willing to pursue a settlement on the basis of the *Tiger* proposals, sanctions would not persuade him to resume discussions with the British. In fact, far from bringing Rhodesia to its knees, the blockade was probably hurting the weakened British economy more than the Rhodesian. The major stumbling block was the question of a return to 'legality', and the basic unacceptability of the principle of 'No Independence before Majority Rule' or NIBMAR. If a compromise in this area could be arrived at, then a settlement might be possible.

For the remainder of 1967, Harold Wilson hedged, and for no other reason than that dropping NIBMAR would invite all the usual histrionics. Exchanges were made, and contacts maintained, but by the end of the year, no substantive movement had been recorded at all. Smith's jitters, in the meanwhile, were betrayed somewhat in his New Year message of 1967/8.

He admitted quite frankly that Rhodesia could not indefinitely sustain the current state of uncertainty, and that a solution urgently needed to be found. In response, the question of a Rhodesian republic was once again raised and debated, but this did not answer to the problem.

During February 1968, Alec Douglas Home made a flying visit to Rhodesia, calling in on a variety of people. These included Governor Humphrey Gibbs, still holding vigil in Government House, Lord Malvern, Winston Field, Robert Tredgold and, of course, Ian Smith. Neither did Home spare Smith the usual unwanted advice. Although genuine and bipartisan concern for white Rhodesia did exist at the highest level of the British establishment, the Rhodesian Prime Minister was warned that time was running out.

In the meanwhile, national attention was briefly diverted by the release of a Supreme Court judgement, supported by a majority of the appellate division, confirming the local de jure status of the UDI government. This strengthened the country's claim to independence and edged it closer to the status of a republic. Thanks to the fact that now, in its own eyes, Rhodesian independence was legal, Chief Justice Sir Hugh Beadle separated himself from the British constitutional resistance and withdrew as Humphrey Gibbs' legal advisor, thereby further isolating the beleaguered Governor.

In June of that year, Wilson prevailed on an old friend and RAF associate of Ian Smith, Max Aitken, son of Lord Beaverbrook, to make a secret visit to Salisbury to try and nudge the process forward. Accompanying him was Lord Goodman, legal advisor to both Aitken and Wilson. Despite a warning that he was in danger of painting himself into a corner, Smith was once again in no mood to compromise. After consultations, both Aitken and Goodman were prepared to concede that no settlement with Rhodesia would be possible until the terms of NIBMAR were dropped. Smith also stood his ground on the matter of a return to legality until he heard what new proposals Harold Wilson had to offer.

Wilson's next move was to send a senior Labour official, James Bottomley (no relation to Arthur), who arrived in Rhodesia to gauge Gibbs' opinion and test the temperature of the water. Bottomley found Smith still receptive and willing to work around the *Tiger* proposals, but the vexed question of a return to legality and NIBMAR remained the chief stumbling block.

In September 1968, a message was received by Gibbs stating that Wilson, bravely taking the initiative in the face of powerful opposition from the left wing of his own party, wanted to meet with Smith soon. Ignoring some obvious lessons of *déjà vu,* the British PM again proposed that the venue be a Royal Navy warship moored in Gibraltar harbour. The meeting was duly set for 9 to 13 October aboard HMS *Fearless*. On this occasion, the Rhodesians were given their own accommodations on HMS *Kent,* moored alongside.

This Wilson was conspicuously courteous and took care not to ruffle Smith's feathers, but in every other respect, the meeting was more or less a repeat performance of the last. Apart from Sir Humphrey Gibbs and a handful of cabinet ministers, the Rhodesian delegation included arguably the most hard-line official in the Government. Secretary for Internal Affairs Hostes Nichol made no secret of his admiration for the South African system and advocated the creation of Bantustans in Rhodesia. In the opinion of MI6, he was in the delegation purely to minimise any chance of the conference succeeding. This is a confusing accusation, considering other indications that Smith very much desired a settlement. Nevertheless, Nichol's contribution was extremely negative and led to questions about Smith's sincerity. Perhaps, in the final analysis, it was just that he was again reluctant to be the one making concessions.

It is also interesting to note that the earlier problem of a return to legality barely featured on the agenda of this conference. The British were also prepared to drop the six principles of NIBMAR, requiring instead only a commitment to majority rule, a fact which should have seen the Rhodesians rubbing their hands in glee. The only point they could find to take issue with was a matter previously agreed during the *Tiger* talks, namely that any individual who cared to do so could make an appeal to the Privy Council on issues of legislation. Here the conference stalled, for Smith would not concede that a British court should be permitted to usurp legislative decisions that were the province of the Rhodesian Parliament.

The *Fearless* talks, however, were as good as it would ever get, and Smith under the circumstances could not reasonably have hoped for more. However, the meeting broke up with a communiqué announcing that a gulf remained between the two parties, but that efforts to bridge it would continue.

For Wilson, the issue was filed away in preparation for another bruising Commonwealth Conference, followed by another general election. Smith made this parting comment on the last substantive Wilsonian contribution to the Rhodesia saga: “It was clear to us throughout the talks that the British were obsessed with the question of black majority rule and that this dominated all their thinking. They are prepared to accept that the white man in Rhodesia is expendable.”

As much as Harold Wilson was prone to half-truth and outright lie, it is hard to find much sincerity on the part of Smith in this comment. If not expendable, then certainly an anachronism, and that might perhaps be the same thing. As far as an obsession with majority rule was concerned, in the light of history, how could a British prime minister have been otherwise?

On 7 November 1968 the three leaders of ZANU, Ndabaningi Sithole, Leopold Takawira and Robert Mugabe, were briefed on the details of the HMS *Fearless*. George Thomson and Maurice Foley, two high ranking British cabinet officials, flew into Rhodesia for the specific purpose of gauging nationalist opinion. To avoid official eavesdropping, the meeting was held at the New Sarum airbase, under a tree at the furthest end of the runway. It was an animated and mostly unsatisfactory encounter. The two British ministers were left in no doubt that the nationalist movement in Rhodesia would accept no accommodation with Ian Smith. The fact that Harold Wilson was willing to grant independence to Rhodesia based on the 1961 Constitution so dismayed the three that Takawira had to be restrained. George Thomson’s assertion that half a loaf was better than none almost brought foam to his lips.

Mugabe then brought up the issue of force, asking why Britain was so loath to suppress the rebellion in Rhodesia when she had been so willing in Malaya, Aden, Cyprus, Kenya and the Suez? To be reminded of Suez, of course, was painful, while the mention of Aden and Malaya brought back memories of white Rhodesian military assistance in those campaigns. Thomson resorted to the plea that logistically Britain was just not capable of launching a military assault against a regime that was armed to the teeth and bristling for a fight. Mugabe laughed, and spoke the heresy ‘kith and kin’. Shocked denials, of course, followed, but everyone knew that he was right.

As the two British cabinet ministers boarded a waiting aircraft and lifted off in the direction of Kenya, were a week on the East African coast

awaited, the three nationalists climbed into the back of a police Land Rover for the journey back to Salisbury Remand. Their united front crumbled at the moment that they were alone. By then, each was entering his fifth year of incarceration, with no end in sight, and for all the loss of life and liberty among them, there was not a sign of the regime weakening. Now, living one day at a time, they had very little reason for optimism. The armed struggle was crushed before it could start, and for the most part, the common man was relieved that the infighting of the late fifties and early sixties was over. The country was now swarming with sell-outs and informers, and almost every day, captured guerrillas were sentenced to death and executed for a struggle that no longer seemed to have any hope. To these stresses were added the more mundane concerns of families struggling on the outside to cope, wives seeking comfort and financial support elsewhere and children running wild.

So it was that rumours began to reach the ears of Ndabaningi Sithole. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn once remarked: “The thoughts of a prisoner, they are not free either. They keep returning to the same things. A single idea keeps stirring”. Word had begun to circulate that Sithole’s wife was fraternising with Portuguese soldiers encamped on his farm south of Chipinga. As unlikely as this was, the news tormented him. It compounded the daily pressures and clear evidence that his grip on the leadership of the Party was slipping. For this, there were many reasons, but mainly it was because he was tribally isolated. He could hardly fail to notice that meetings and discussions paused or ceased as he passed, or walked into a room. Such discussions often focused on the viability of a leader originating from a small tribe, the *Ndau*, confined to the extreme east of the country. Both Mugabe and Takawira were from more substantial and more representative tribal groupings, and many members felt that one of them would be a better leader.

Less visible was the hint of weakness in Sithole’s character no longer obscured by his intellectual achievements. Once the struggle degenerated into a brawl, the brawlers would rise to the surface, and Sithole was manifestly not one of these. At the inaugural congress of ZANU in 1964, Sithole narrowly defeated Mugabe for the leadership role, and there was now no love between the two, and unmistakably, Mugabe was now emerging as the stronger.

One day Sithole was admitted to a local hospital for routine treatment, and as he was being attended to, he fell into conversation with his white doctor. The doctor inquired about the health of his wife, and Sithole replied that she was well. To this, the doctor remarked he was glad, and casually added that he was sorry nothing could have been done to prevent her miscarriage.

Sithole was returned to prison in a state of shock. If the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, then the way to his stomach is through his heart. Already emotionally weakened, he quickly lapsed into depression, and in the quiet of his confinement, began threshing his mind to find a way to shorten the revolution, and as he did, the forces of law and order moved in.

From time to time, Sithole used a certain 'Mrs Cele' as a courier for his communications with the outside world. Unbeknown to him, however, Mrs Cele was a salaried police informer who routinely passed his correspondence on to Special Branch. When Sithole came up with a desperate scheme, therefore, to assassinate Ian Smith and his Law and Order Minister Desmond Lardner-Burke, Special Branch was immediately on to him. Initially, he kept the idea to himself but, in about June 1968, he identified Maurice Nyagumbo as a possible confederate. Nyagumbo was a recklessly bold nationalist, of poor education and limited intelligence, but known for being a solid soldier and a fanatical revolutionary. Nyagumbo thought the scheme was marvellous and immediately agreed to help. Sithole would pursue outside contacts while Nyagumbo was left to organise what funds he could through a certain 'Dr Mundawarara'. Sithole's instructions to his contacts were ridiculously explicit, and Nyagumbo bungled his way through a series of intelligence leaks and mishaps. Special Branch agents collating all this must have wondered whether the whole plot was not some kind of a joke.

Nyagumbo, however, secured £300 while Sithole wrote to a 'Mr X' in Salisbury, instructing him to employ "some of our hardcore criminals" to carry out the assassination. Up to thirty letters were ultimately smuggled out of prison by friendly warders and passed on to Special Branch. They were accumulated until that inevitable day when, in front of their astonished associates, Sithole and Nyagumbo were arrested and moved quickly into isolation.

Each was taken into a separate interrogation room and told that they were to be charged with treason. It now began to sink in that he was in real trouble. Instead of open-ended jail time, Sithole now faced a mandatory death sentence. It was accepted that Nyagumbo was of little political value, and in due course charges against him were dropped. Sithole, on the other hand, was presented with a deal that he could hardly refuse. In exchange for leniency, he agreed to try and persuade his colleagues to abandon the armed struggle and commit themselves to work for change within the constitution.

Sithole's trial took place from 3 to 12 February 1969, during which time he was permitted to visit his colleagues in prison to present his proposals. His argument was only that it would be more useful for the Central Committee to orchestrate the struggle with limited freedoms on the outside than with no freedoms at all. Their early faith in a quick collapse of the regime had been proved wrong, and there was nothing to be gained by all of them rotting for years in prison as they waited for change.

His colleagues greeted this volte-face with dismay. It was said that Takawira was reduced to tears. When Mugabe recovered his speech, he brutally denounced Sithole, pointing the way for others to condemn him as corrupt, weak, cowardly and mad, or all of the above. Sithole listened but remained unrepentant. "That's all right", he said, "you have turned down my constructive suggestion. But I want to assure you that I am not going to spend all the six years in prison. I am going to work hard to extricate myself."

To the white prison chaplain, a deeply depressed Sithole later confessed, "I'll hang for this unless I can do something to form the basis of my defence." As his trial progressed, he held his line and agreed to renounce violence in word, thought and deed. For that, he escaped with his life. He did not, however, avoid his six-year prison sentence.

While public lamentations were staged for the benefit of the rank and file, it is unlikely that Mugabe or any of the leadership felt particularly distressed to see Sithole go. He was a moderate, and as such had outlived his usefulness. A few days after this encounter, the Central Committee meeting was held, during which Sithole's leadership was condemned. In a further closed session, Mugabe was elected to the leadership of the party. Fearing any appearance of disunity, Mugabe insisted that the matter be kept under wraps for the time being. Sithole would simply be frozen out of

committee business, which would not be difficult since he would be locked up in a prison cell for the foreseeable future.

A little later Mugabe's ambitions were given another boost when Leopold Takawira suddenly died. It had been apparent for some time that his health was deteriorating, and in the last year of his life, he suffered chronic weight loss for reasons never diagnosed, but nonetheless indicative of diabetes. One morning he collapsed, and it was some four hours before he was examined by a doctor, who then transferred him immediately to Salisbury Hospital. It happened that Takawira's wife worked at the same hospital, but was neither informed of her husband's condition nor of his admission. The first she knew of the incident was the following morning when told that he had died during the night.

Ndabaningi Sithole

5
Lords Home and Pearce

Ian Smith was a formidable opponent, but he lacked any vision. We offered him much better terms at the Fearless and Tiger talks than anything he is going to get now. He held out for too long, and is going to end up with nothing – **Harold Wilson**

The new decade opened on an optimistic note. In the spring of 1970, the colony was declared a republic, and at last Sir Humphrey and his wife Molly Gibbs were able to close the visitor's book, pack up their few belongings and hand over the keys of the official residence to Clifford and Mary Dupont. In the weeks that followed, a mood of sombre reflection hung over the country. The decision had not been easy, nor unanimous. Smith was never one hundred percent sold on the idea, and he had no satisfactory answer when asked by the service chiefs what it could hope to achieve. On the whole, however, the country consummated its independence with little or no regret and moved forward.

Strange things, however, were occurring. The economy was steadily growing, the armed insurgency seemed a thing of the past, and white immigration was steady. The fundamentals, therefore, were in excellent condition. No one was under any illusion, however, that a republic would prompt general recognition, and it was generally felt that neither Britain nor Rhodesia had much to offer one another any more. The Rhodesian green and white flew over Government House, Clifford Dupont was appointed first President, and a bicameral constitution came into effect that recognised but did not promise racial parity.

The United States was the first to distance itself from the new Republic, and Britain quickly followed. Wilson wearily fed himself to the lions again, as the usual voices cried out in the usual way, and both the UK and the US vetoed a Security Council resolution demanding tougher action against Rhodesia. In the meanwhile, Smith took the country to polls, and again, the Rhodesia Front again won all fifty 'A' Roll seats. This was a thumb against the nose to the international community and an open mandate for Smith.

Things, however, took a turn for the better a few months later when Harold Wilson suddenly disappeared from the scene, swept from power in

the general election of June 1970. Smith was now dealing with the Tories, and that was always good news. Better still, incoming Prime Minister Edward Heath had absolutely no interest in Rhodesia and handed the whole problem over to his Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas Home.

Sir Alec was a sportsman and an ex-county cricketer so it could be expected that he and Smith would do well together. When given the go-ahead to deal with Smith, Home moved quickly, and within six months was able to report to the Commons that preliminary contacts were on course to establish whether detailed negotiations were possible. These talks, although they continued through 1971, were nonetheless informal and friendly. A sense of shared destiny between the Rhodesians and the Tories seemed to have been revived, and the easy rapport between Sir Alec and Ian Smith yielded many compromises. In fact, ever since, pundits have regarded the deal that was eventually reached as an absolute giveaway. Not a single black opinion was at any time given or sought, so quite naturally an agreement was easily achieved. On 15 November, Sir Alec himself flew into Salisbury to finalise matters, and a draft settlement was confirmed and signed within the week.

A return to legality was now just a step to the left. No interim administration and no appeal to the Privy Council. NIBMAR was whittled down to just the principle of parity, with black advancement protected only by Rhodesian guarantees. It was indeed a giveaway. The problem that nobody really thought was a problem at the time was the broad-based test of acceptability. How would that be managed? Smith genuinely felt that his understanding of black opinion was accurate, so he felt reasonably sure of his ground. Sir Alec suggested a Commission of Inquiry, and Smith, quite naturally, was happy to agree.

However, let it be said that the information Smith had available to him on the question of black opinion, on any subject, was filtered through the Internal Affairs Department. The Internal Affairs Department was the heir of the old Native Department, and its primary role was management and security in the Tribal Trust Lands. It was not rural opinion that mattered, however, but urban, and the most accurate assessment of this came from the CIO. Smith, however, began his relationship with Ken Flower, CIO Director general, very poorly. The two men neither liked nor trusted one another, and so as CIO reports of a gathering revolt in the

country gathered dust on Smith's desk as he relied on more comforting reports from Internal Affairs.

Internal Affairs told him that the black man in the street would choose a white government in preference to a radical black nationalist takeover. In a way, this was easy to believe because it was so logical. The evidence of Smith's eyes told him that every black nation born out of the wreckage of the British Empire now lay in ruins. Why would a relatively prosperous, safe and employed population make such a decision? It was black nationalists holding the townships to ransom, and white policemen keeping the peace. It was obvious. So confident was he, indeed, that he ordered the release of a quite a few detained nationalists, who were then permitted to interact and organise. In his autobiography, Smith claims that the people in Highfield, that traditional hotbed of highbrow black politics, were openly celebrating the agreement. The only concern that he had was to get the Commission operating as soon as possible before the nationalists could regroup and mobilise.

The Commission of Inquiry was to be chaired by former Lord of Appeal, Lord Edward Holroyd Pearce. This, then, was the much storied Pearce Commission. Sir Alec Douglas Home was in full agreement that it must commence its work as soon as possible, and so Smith acted swiftly, placing on standby the entire resource of the country. By year-end, however, there was still no sign of the Commission. Polite inquiries from the Rhodesian Government were met by oddly vague assurances, and then things were further delayed by the festive season, and in the end, it was not until early in the new year of 1972 that the commissioners finally made an appearance in Salisbury. By this time, of course, Smith's fears had been fully realised. The released nationalists made excellent use of those vital weeks to organise a vigorous campaign, backed up by plenty of that good old 'Positive Action'. By the time the commission finally got to work, the atmosphere on the ground was entirely changed.

In fact, at this point, black party politics took a fascinating turn. There appeared to be a sharp difference between ZANU and ZAPU at home and abroad. The radical voices tended to be heard on the outside, while the more moderate were within. This, of course, is easily explainable, but it was a fact nonetheless. Those in exile could see no alternative to war, while those on the inside still enjoyed lines of communication. There was beside this a practical political vacuum in Rhodesia. No forum of organised black

resistance was at liberty to give evidence to a commission of inquiry. A bi-partisan platform was quickly organised, called the 'African National Council'. The idea of it was to represent both ZANU and ZAPU in dealing with the Pearce Commission, and it was staffed reasonably evenly between the two parties.

The chairman of the ANC, carefully chosen to raise no tensions on either side, was forty-six-year-old Abel Muzorewa, a Methodist Bishop, and the first black bishop in the country. If the intention was to present a straw man, then Muzorewa indeed was well chosen. He was a political cartoonist's dream, short, bespectacled, overly serious, lacking real intelligence and certainly void of vision. He had a taste for the bizarre and prevaricated with infuriating indecision almost from the beginning to the end of his political career. The organisation, however, was not conceived with his performance in mind, and if the establishment failed to take Bishop Muzorewa seriously, then that so much the better.

Despite these unimpressive credentials, Muzorewa was ambitious, and perhaps a little like Sir Edgar Whitehead, somewhat blind to his own limitations. To the surprise of many, he led a spirited campaign, and almost everywhere that the Pearce Commission ventured it was met by ANC-organised demonstrations. The ANC catchphrase was 'Reject this settlement. We will get better terms later on.' Thus, to the dismay of both white Rhodesia and the British Foreign Office, the Pearce Commission was forced on 12 March 1972 to conclude that the settlement was not acceptable to the population of Rhodesian as a whole. The Commission's final report observed:

> We are satisfied on our evidence that the proposals are acceptable to the great majority of Europeans. We are equally satisfied, after considering all our evidence including that on intimidation, that the majority of Africans reject the proposals. In our opinion, the people of Rhodesia as a whole do not regard the proposals as acceptable as a basis for independence.

Smith could well believe it. He had the police reports on his desk. While not quite 1964, violence was widespread and intimidation general. Of course, they rejected the agreement. Peace, however, in later interviews, made the point simply that yes, there had been intimidation, but that did not

alter the verdict of the people. Black Rhodesia rejected the settlement agreement.

Smith could not accept this and explained later that the concept of a ballot and the idea of individual thought and opinion simply did not exist in native culture. He swore then and swore until his death that the blacks of Rhodesia supported him. In herding the masses towards rejection of the proposals, a small group of radicalised nationalists had merely robbed the white tribe of a rare opportunity for legitimacy. This he held firm to until the day he breathed his last. From that moment on, and for the very first time, white Rhodesia felt itself swimming against the tide, and thereafter, many were apt to look at their black servants and wonder for the first on whose side were they *really* on.

6
The Losing War

We are not prepared to be forced to hand over this beautiful country to people who have no ability to govern – **The Right Honourable Desmond Lardner-Burke**

As all of this was taking place, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Portuguese administration in Mozambique was under real pressure. For so long, it was that wonderful Afro-Latino laissez-faire east of the border that made it such a pleasure to visit, to enjoy the beaches, the deep-sea fishing, the wine the prawns and the *mulatto* women. But it was time now for the Portuguese to begin facing their own demons. On both coasts, hard-line communist insurgencies were gaining ground. In Angola, the situation was complicated by multiple fronts to the war, but in Mozambique, it was one party, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, or 'FRELIMO'. FRELIMO operated out of Tanzania, and it was pushing steadily south. The insurgency, however, tended to run into trouble in the Tete Province, at which point freedom fighters were forced to cross the Zambezi River at the head of extending supply lines.

For four years the war in northern Mozambique fizzled along in a hinterland way beyond the interest of most urbanised whites in both colonies. Construction of the enormous Cabora Bassa hydroelectric project was underway on the Zambezi River, and the Portuguese were always quick to dismiss suggestions that the war in any way inhibited progress. This, of course, was not so. FRELIMO's strategy required crossing the Zambezi River, and this depended on the control of Cabo Delgado and Niassa Provinces, and there seemed to be no reason why this should not happen.

There was no enthusiasm in the rank and file of the Portuguese Army in Mozambique to fight. The soldiery comprised mainly conscripted peasants who knew less than they cared about Mozambique. By the end of the 1960s, FRELIMO had effectively occupied all the territory from the line of the Zambezi River north to the Tanzanian border. Then, in 1968, after four years of war, FRELIMO opened up a new front in the Tete Province below the vital Zambezi line. This was a severe blow to the Portuguese, but far more so for the Rhodesians. The Zambezi was the Rubicon, and FRELIMO had crossed it. After that, any friend of FRELIMO leader

Samora Machel with interest in piercing the soft flanks of Rhodesia could rely on FRELIMO protection and support.

It was at that moment that Rhodesian security concerns ceased to be containable. The Zambezi ran the length of Rhodesia's border with Zambia and was a perfect defensive line so long as the war remained confined between the twenty-fifth and thirtieth parallels. Further east was a land border with Mozambique, and if guerrillas could just step over it without having to cross the Zambezi, then Rhodesia would have a whole new problem on its hands. Of vital importance, as the 1970s dawned, was to keep FRELIMO north of the line, with or without Portuguese co-operation.

As it happened, the Portuguese did accept Rhodesian military assistance, but on condition that no suggestion be made that Portugal could not cope with its own security demands. While it was not officially acknowledged, Rhodesian military activity in Mozambique began in earnest in 1970. Ostensibly this was in the form of combined operations with Portuguese units, but in practice, the Rhodesians were generally on their own.

Rhodesia used its regular units, primarily the Special Air Service and the Rhodesia Light Infantry, supported by the Air Force and units of the Rhodesian African Rifles. In January 1972, a tactical HQ was set up in the Makonde Protected Village south of the Zambezi River, and from there the RAR patrolled the south bank of the river and the SAS the mountain areas to the north. Ken Flower later recalled overhearing General Costa Gomes, the man in charge, ask his military attaché if the Rhodesians really expected the Portuguese to live like animals in the bush. "No, Senhor." Came the reply. "It is the example that is quite magnificent, and it suits the Rhodesians, who are Anglo-Saxons, but they don't really expect that sort of behaviour from us Latins."

In the meanwhile, while the SAS and RLI were treating FRELIMO to the only real fighting of the war, Rhodesian Special Branch and the CIO were scanning mountains of recovered intelligence to establish whether any sort of strategic alliance existed between FRELIMO and the 'Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army', or ZANLA, the military wing of ZANU. The answer came in March 1972, as Special Branch began receiving reports of the arrival of a small ZANLA reconnaissance group investigating a possible route south through Mozambique. The Portuguese were steadfast in denying that there was any ZANLA traffic through Tete,

but they were probably the least likely to know. They did agree, however, to mount a combined operation with the SAS to investigate the reports.

The Portuguese were then sent on patrol some distance away while a SAS team mounted a surprise attack on the Matimbe Base. There they found what they were looking for. While it was difficult to determine from the bodies precisely who was FRELIMO and who was not, a search revealed a passage in a notebook that read: “Go tell Evensi that the Zimbabwe boys have arrived.”

Evensi Mashonganidze was a local independent church leader, which almost automatically made him a guerrilla contact man. In fact, he was already known to Special Branch for precisely that reason. However, even if he had been apprehended and questioned on the matter, it is unlikely that he would have been able to shed much light. A situation report was radioed through to Salisbury, but the CIO remained sceptical. Special Branch was immediately deployed in force to the northeast to investigate, and scepticism at CIO headquarters soon evaporated. No one could quite believe just how far the nationalists had progressed in laying the groundwork for a new phase of the armed struggle. No one, indeed, had been paying much attention, since everyone thought that the war was won. However, an arms cache was soon unearthed deep in Rhodesian territory, then another, followed by local testimony confirming the steady transit over the preceding months of large quantities of war materiel into Rhodesia. Arms were even discovered in a Salisbury industrial site, exposing another catastrophic, and unprecedented intelligence failure.

The security establishment was stunned, and so was Ian Smith. On 4 December 1972, in a mood of rare solemnity, he made a broadcast to the nation in which he said: “The security situation is far more serious than it appears on the surface, and if the man in the street could have access to the security information which my colleagues in government and I have, then I think he would be a lot more worried than he is today.”

Almost at the moment that Ian Smith uttered those words, the first group of twenty-one heavily armed men slipped into the country and moved immediately into pre-prepared hiding places in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land, northeast of Centenary. A tough and motivated young field commander by the name of Solomon Mujuru, better known by his *nom-de-guerre* ‘Rex Nhongo’, led the group. Nhongo’s plan was simply to hit a soft target to stir up a hornet's nest and see how the Security Forces reacted.

After a brief reconnaissance, Centenary farmer Marc de Borchgrave's Altena Farm was selected, and then subjected to a few minutes of machine-gun and rifle fire before Nhongo and his team slipped back into hiding.

De Borchgrave and his family took temporary refuge on a neighbouring farm, Whistlefield, which was also hit a few days later. Four Rhodesian soldiers were killed by landmine blasts during the follow-up operation. Nhongo and his men, in the meanwhile, moved quickly back into the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land to wait on events.

The immediate Security Force response was to establish a Joint Operational Center (JOC) codenamed Operation *Hurricane*. Troops and equipment were moved into the area in the expectation of another quick sortie, but this time the army found no trace of the enemy, and local villagers had absolutely nothing to say. It was at this point that the blacks of the countryside were confronted by some of the blunter realities of the struggle for their hearts and minds. They faced the guerrillas at night, and the Security Forces during the day. Revealing intelligence about guerrilla movements invited brutal retribution while failing to do so could bring about the confiscation or destruction of property. There were two schools of thought in the security services regarding the correct response to dead intelligence sources. The first was the more forceful approach, or 'keep the blacks in their place', while the second was the more pragmatic, 'keep the blacks on-side'. For the rural population, it was a very sharp dilemma, and although the balance of terror unequivocally lay on the side of the insurgents, an encounter with either side was never likely to be pleasant.

And here, indeed, lay the truth. The Maoist theory on the subject of people's war is simple – an armed insurrection cannot succeed without the active support of the masses. At some point, the penny dropped, and the Rhodesian nationalists understood that an armed struggle could only be fought with the full integration of the people and the militias. According to the mythology of the struggle, the first to hear and take on board this message was Josiah Tongogara, a ZANLA commander undergoing a period of training in China.

Like Rex Nhongo, Tongogara was a tough and charismatic leader, who would in due course take over full military command of ZANLA. Having listened and learned, he returned to southern Africa in the glow of an epiphany. Merely sending guerrillas to confront Rhodesian troops without first educating the local people on the nature and aims of the

struggle could only invite suspicion and confusion. Significant preparatory work was therefore required, the first step of which was to infiltrate political commissars into the tribal areas to politicise the masses. It was such a simple idea that cost so many lives to learn. Not before the common man fully understood and identified with the aims and objectives of armed struggle could fighters be safely deployed among them.

Herbert Chitepo outlined the new strategy in a 1972 statement. The Party, he said, intended to reverse the errors of the past by politicising and mobilising the people before mounting any attacks against the regime. The object of any direct military action from that point on would not be to defeat the Security Forces in battle, but to harass and attack vulnerable targets, the effect of which would be to so attenuate the reach of the Rhodesian Security Forces that white manpower requirements would override the demands of commerce and industry. It was a simple strategy that had every chance of succeeding, in particular since the opening of the Tete front in Mozambique.

The Tete region now lay under the control of FRELIMO. The difficulty, however, was that the movement was led by the purist, Castroesque revolutionary Samora Machel, who remained implacably hostile to ZANU, seen widely as a splinter movement of ZAPU. The offer to capitalise on Tete was therefore extended to ZAPU only, as the first and legitimate liberation movement. ZAPU, however, for numerous reasons, was inert at that time, while ZANLA was equipped and ready. Machel waited on James Chikerema, the ZAPU leader in exile, but in the end began to sense that a vital opportunity was being lost, and which point he authorised a limited number of ZANLA fighters to occupy FRELIMO rear bases, and commence operations in Rhodesia. These were the ‘ZANU boys’ unearthed by Special Branch in Tete, in the aftermath of SAS operations.

Before this, ZANU had been covertly deploying reconnaissance groups into the tribal trust lands of the Rhodesian northeast, to begin the process of preparing the people for war. Of this period Ken Flower wrote, with the flavour of white observations of the time, that the process led inevitably to “intimidation in its very worst forms”. Chinese war philosopher Sun Tzu put it more succinctly: ‘Kill one, frighten ten thousand’.

Indeed, ZANLA’s methods of political enforcement were as sinister and brutal as any in Africa. Cadres who returned to Rhodesia on these

political missions were often deployed outside their home areas lest sentimentality intrude on what needed to be done. Perpetrators of this type of violence morally transitioned from guerrillas to terrorists, with the use of killings and torture that were at times aberrational. Their arrival in any given district was announced with a harsh application of salutary violence, followed by a period of intense political education. The message in all of this was clear, and few failed to heed it.

The essential doctrine that underwrote the program was also highly persuasive. It played on a cocktail of common grievances, promises of restitution, a subtle allusion to Marxism and much stronger references to the historical significance of the struggle. The latter was supported by an ideological return to the shrines and mediums of a bygone age. It was no coincidence this new phase of the war, the 'Second Chimurenga', was opening precisely where the first Chimurenga began. This was the seat of the old Mwene Mutapa Empire, and the home of Mbuya Nehanda, executed along with Kagubi during the Mashona Rebellion. Mbuya Nehanda, her symbolic significance revitalised, was absorbed into the iconography of the 'Liberation Struggle'. Sometime early 1972, ZANLA guerrillas contacted an elderly woman who for the sixty years prior was known to be the reincarnated spirit of Mbuya Nehanda. Introducing themselves, they were told by Nehanda that her medium was to be transported across the border into Mozambique, from where she would assist in the planning of the Struggle.

It might perhaps be worth noting that by the 1970s, respect for traditional authority was mostly compromised by the 'Chiefs Councils', where traditional chiefs functioned as de facto civil servants, receiving a government salary. The population, therefore, tended to look to the spirit mediums as the archivists of the nation's traditional institutions, and a vital force in the preservation of a collective identity. They were also the last surviving indigenous authority that the guerrillas could cite to validate both themselves and the Struggle. In a radio broadcast aired in January 1973, Ian Smith explained the phenomenon to the nation to the best of his ability, and probably to the satisfaction of most whites. "They found a few witchdoctors of doubtful character and of little substance, and succeeded in bribing them to their side."

Of doubtful character or not, the Security Forces were suddenly chasing invisible guerrillas. No one was changing sides, and no one was

talking. Farms were being attacked, roads mined and vehicles ambushed, but no one knew anything. To the tribesmen and villagers of the countryside, the price of treason had been amply demonstrated, besides which, few did not now at least partly identify with the struggle. Inevitably, frustration began to build in the ranks of the security services, which tended to find expression in collective punishment, as troops lashed out at innocent people who were rarely innocent. Blacks became practical liars thanks to the nature of their circumstances, and their blank faces and stubborn denials proved beyond doubt that they knew something.

On 19 January 1973, emergency regulations came into effect, granting power to the government and government agents to impose collective fines, confiscate cattle or burn villages where members were suspected of aiding and abetting guerrillas. Two weeks later, the police closed down all the beer halls, clinics, schools, butcheries and stores in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Lands. A month later the maximum penalty for supporting the insurgency was raised from five to twenty years imprisonment. In May these regulations were incorporated as amendments to the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, and in September the Act was amended again to impose a mandatory death sentence or life imprisonment for terrorist activities. The punishment for recruiting guerrillas was increased to twenty years and provided for the forfeiture of property. All this could be taken as an admission by the government that it had lost the battle for the hearts and minds of the people. It was a rare man or woman indeed who chose to risk fearful retribution at the hands of their liberators by leaking information to Special Branch.

To deal with this problem, Salisbury borrowed a strategy from earlier British conflicts. The use of containment camps or concentration camps was the manifestation of a simple counterinsurgency principle – isolate the fighting men from the support base of their homes and women-folk, and the struggle will soon collapse. It worked reasonably well during the Anglo-Boer War, Malaya and Kenya, so why not Rhodesia. The model most closely followed by the Rhodesian Government was the *Aldeamento*s system used in Mozambique up until the end of colonialism. In simple terms, people were concentrated, ostensibly for the sake of their own protection, in fortified camps that were termed ‘Protected Villages’.

By mid-1973 four such Protected Villages were established in the northeast, compacting thousands of villagers into a controllable area. These

tended to be overcrowded because of inaccurate population estimates and the ad hoc nature of construction. In essence, the method was to create an area demarcated by security fencing into which, with government help, people were able to build their own simple dwellings. The final result resembled a vast village compound surrounded by a fortified military perimeter. A separate branch of the Security Forces was formed to administer the system, which came to be regarded as something of a poor relation of the Army. In due course, the Guard Force became a receptacle for conscripted whites for one reason or another unsuited to combat roles, and for foreign recruits interested in joining the Rhodesian Army. These were often put in command of poorly trained and apathetic black 'troops'.

On 14 December 1973, a patrol of South African Police in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land came upon an African woman gathering wood while carrying a baby on her back. Receiving what he thought was an unsatisfactory answer to a question, a white constable seized the child and cut its throat with a Swiss Army Knife. The woman walked to Bindura Police Station with the body to report the incident, and a docket for murder was opened. Subsequent interrogation of black BSAP details attached to the South African patrol confirmed the incident. South African commanders were initially bemused by the fuss and somewhat taken aback when the guilty party was arrested and arraigned in the High Court. The commanding officer of the South African CID, accompanied by legal advisors, arrived in the country to examine the evidence and interview their men. Within a few days, the Rhodesians were informed at the highest level that the matter, if pursued, would not be beneficial to Rhodesian relations with South Africa. A few days later the constable was released and repatriated home.

Closer to home, the government was also apt to lash out at the ghosts of an invisible war. Ian Smith closed the border between Zambia and Rhodesia on 9 January 1973, warning that it would remain closed until the Zambian Government acted to stop the movement of guerrillas across the Zambezi. If nothing else, this forced Kenneth Kaunda to accept, willingly or otherwise, that he had finally been sucked into the struggle for Zimbabwe. However, closing the border immediately affected regional transport networks, and with his only two friends grumbling in his ear, Smith had no choice but to reopen. Kaunda, however, made the most of a bad business and announced that the border would remain closed, and it did.

The foreign press was another target of official attacks. In March 1973, freelance journalist Peter Niesewand was jailed and later deported for divulging official secrets. His crime was a routine report filed for the UK *Guardian* highlighting Rhodesian military cooperation with the Portuguese, a fact that the Rhodesian Government had to date denied. Niesewand, a native of Gwelo, continued to report on Rhodesia from Zambia and Mozambique.

In another indication of internal stresses, a minor rebellion took place in 1973 when Alan Savory, a young Member of Parliament, ecologist, territorial officer and pioneer of the Tracker Combat Unit, conspicuously broke ranks. Savory put forward the position that while the guerrilla movements were politically aligned with the Eastern Bloc, that should not obscure the obvious truth. The war, he said, was not a Cold War conflict, but a local civil war. He repeatedly warned that nothing could be gained by insisting that the war was ultimately a fight against communism. Brute force, he added, and tough talk would eventually lose the war. It was he too who made the first official reference to nationalist insurgents not as 'terrorists' but as 'guerrillas'. To win the war, he told Parliament, the guerrillas only required that the masses remain passive. For Rhodesia to win, it would be necessary for the bulk of the population to actively support the Government, and there were few in the country at that stage who believed this to be even a remote possibility.

Savory went on to echo the frequently repeated CIO mantra that a political solution was the only solution, and he proposed the idea of inviting the guerrilla leaders to a constitutional conference. This succeeded only in stirring up the bile of the conservative majority, and it was unfortunate that Savory chose to articulate this message directly after three Security Force members were killed in an ambush. Smith described Savory's ideas as "the most irresponsible and evil I have ever heard."

Ken Flower put it another way. "RF (Rhodesian Front) policies, moving towards apartheid, have embittered Africans, or at best, turned them into neutrals waiting to see whether the guerrillas are 'Freedom Fighters' or whether the Security Forces emerge victorious."

Clearly, white Rhodesia was approaching a crossroads. While men like Savory and Flower were cautioning that a Security Force victory was unlikely, bordering on impossible, Smith and his inner circle still held the ear, and the confidence of the nation. However, questions were undoubtedly

being asked, and whites in appreciable numbers were, for the first time, beginning to think about South Africa, New Zealand and Australia as an alternative place in the sun.

7
The Rhodesian Way of War

Few could understand, why we made a stand. For Rhodesia great, was left to her fate. She tried to share, power with rationales there. Deceived by the west, in her fairness quest – **Peter Barlow**

So far, the hard fighting had tended to be handled by the three regular units of the Rhodesian Security Forces, the Special Air Service, the Rhodesia Light Infantry and the Rhodesia African Rifles. Tactically, although killing guerrillas was a productive side-line of counter-terrorism, the main effort had always been on prevention and the accumulation of intelligence. Now, however, killing guerrillas was becoming at least as important, if not more important than intelligence. By the end of 1972, the Rhodesian Security Forces numbered about 5,000 regular Army and Air Force personnel supported by 10,000 white Territorials and some 8,000 BSAP members of both races. The BSAP itself was backed by 35,000 mostly white police reservists scattered all over the country. The regular Army consisted of two battalions, one of which was the all-white Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) and the other the white-officered Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR). Rhodesia also fielded a SAS squadron, 'C' Squadron, allied closely with the parent regiment in Britain.

It was with ample justification, therefore, that white Rhodesia felt confident in the ability of the Security Forces to contain the current security threat, and in this, they succeeded. Containment, however, was the keyword. The Rhodesian Security Forces were comparable in sub-Saharan Africa only to the South African Defence Force, and although undeniably brilliant, they were also rather elite, and small. Herein, indeed, lay its weakness, for it could not be in all places at all times, and sufficient ground coverage was now the most basic requirement.

And so it was that Operation *Hurricane,* established in the aftermath of the Altena and Whistlefield Farm attacks, did not wind down, but became, in the end, the first permanent operational area in the war. As more guerrilla units came in, they were dispersed among local tribesmen, who sheltered and fed them, and through whom re-supply was managed. Targets were selectively chosen, and wherever possible direct confrontation with the security forces was avoided. Periodic contacts yielded captures, who in

turn produced intelligence, but although guerrillas were being killed in appreciable numbers, there was always more, and Rhodesian soldiers and civilians were also dying.

However, for the most part, these events were confined to the Operation *Hurricane* area and did not materially affect the lives of blacks or whites elsewhere. Fuel rationing was gone, immigration was still exceeding emigration, and the economy was for all intents and purposes beating sanctions. The black nationalists were always at each other's throats and appeared to spend more time posturing and grandstanding than trying to win a war. Exports topped pre-UDI levels, inflation hovered at around three per cent, and defence expenditure amounted to just twelve per cent of the annual budget.

However, on the other side, in September 1973 the office of statistics reported the first immigration deficit since the Great Depression. Army Commander Lieutenant-General Peter Walls was heard to comment that shortages of European manpower were beginning to affect essential expansion plans for the Security Forces. The first National Service intake of 1974 was doubled as the net widened. Now not only school leavers, but all white men over the age of twenty-five who had been resident in the country for more than five years became eligible for military service. Even this did not entirely cover the bases, however, and it was decided to raise a second battalion of the RAR. However, two friendly neighbours protected Rhodesia's rump and her eastern flank, and the Zambezi Valley was still the best natural defence possible.

Lieutenant General Peter Walls

8
Struggles Within the Struggle

When the elephants fight it is the grass that suffers – **African Proverb**

Privately Sir Alec Douglas Home was as dismayed as Ian Smith to hear the report of the Pearce Commission, but in public, he took the view that henceforth it was incumbent on Rhodesians of both colours to settle their differences internally. The British should only be approached to endorse what had been found to be mutually acceptable. Desperate to shed the Rhodesian albatross, Home nominally kept the 1971 proposals on the table, but otherwise took a deep step back, and hoped against all precedent that Rhodesians could find a solution to their own problems.

In taking this attitude, Home either forgot, or chose to ignore the fact that most of the leading nationalists were in prison, and whether he knew it or not, the external leadership was in no better shape. The Zimbabwe liberation movement, in fact, was in utter crisis. With a tried and tested determination to undermine any gains, the ZAPU leadership was busy leading both itself and ZANU down the road to virtual ruin, and the main culprit in this particular chapter of nationalist disunity was James Chikerema.

Chikerema was an authentic nationalist. He began as founder and first president of the Southern Rhodesian African National Youth League before slipping down a rung to become vice-president of the revitalised Southern Rhodesia ANC, and later a mere executive member of ZAPU. These eclipses were due primarily to his lack of education but were not helped in the slightest by a tendency to be a snappish, difficult and somewhat paranoid. To arrest his own decline, he insinuated himself close to Nkomo, but since Nkomo had himself only narrowly survived a leadership crisis, he too was crippled by paranoia. Most of Nkomo's best men had either been sacrificed or had crossed the floor, and because Chikerema was both loyal and not unusually gifted, he tended to be the obvious choice for deputy. The mass detention of the top leadership was a further godsend for Chikerema, and as the parties shifted their base of operations to Lusaka, he naturally moved up to the leadership of ZAPU in exile. If ever there was a moment for him to make a name for himself, this was it.

Circumstances, however, seemed somehow always to conspire against James Chikerema. As a founding father of the party, and now back at the helm, he felt that he was owed more respect than he was being given. With neither the charisma nor the intelligence to earn that respect, and unable to compete with the handful of new and rising stars, Chikerema was outclassed, and it irritated him. Nkomo, however, granted him power of attorney, so when in a corner he simply ruled by decree. This tended, of course, to alienate those younger men with genuine ability, Jason Moyo and George Silundika being two of the most obvious, who went on to form a front in opposition to Chikerema within the party, and a power struggle was born.

Chikerema's most famous blunder occurred in 1970 when he accompanied a British film crew into a guerrilla camp in Zambia. As he toured the facility, cameramen were allowed to film men in training who would soon be infiltrated back into Rhodesia. When Moyo was briefed on this, he could hardly believe his ears. Exposing to the media men who were about to fight a vigilant enemy was incomprehensible. Doing so without first consulting with the executive, and indeed with Kaunda, who had always fervently denied that any guerrilla bases existed on his territory, was in both cases a significant breach of faith.

If nothing else, this blunder demonstrated Chikerema's fundamental lack of sophistication. Had he given the matter any thought at all, he would undoubtedly have recognised his folly. But having failed to do so, the only response in his arsenal was to maintain vigorously that he was in the right. The incident, however, provoked an open rift in the party leadership, resulting in a document released by the executive entitled 'Observations on our Struggle'. Jason Moyo was the author, and his comments were not so much observations as a series of bitter denunciations of Chikerema. The latter was personally cited as being guilty of leadership failings, of showing a disregard for security and for allowing a damaging complacency to take root in the heart of the party.

Chikerema's response was too immediate for it to have been adequately considered, and a document entitled 'Reply to Observations on our Struggle' was circulated. In it, Chikerema offered a handful of tart rejoinders in validation of his actions, adding fulsome accusations of tribalism, corruption and immoral conduct. The document ended with an announcement that the entire leadership structure of ZAPU was dissolved,

and henceforth Chikerema would assume absolute control. Moyo replied, noting the extraordinary number of times that Chikerema had used the words ‘I’ and ‘me’ in his exhortations, and expressing regret that the tone of the exchange had been allowed to sink to the level of personal insults.

Chikerema’s coup, in the meanwhile, was declared null and void by a majority of the executive, and as might have been expected, the factions split, and shots were fired. Several dozen fighters were killed as militancy swept rapidly through the camps, coming to a head in March 1971 with an assassination attempt against George Nyandoro in the centre of Lusaka. Nyandoro was also a founding member of ZAPU and an essential ally of Chikerema.

Chikerema was again put on the defensive, and soon found himself forced out of the party offices. With a rapidly dwindling support base, he grew desperate for some shred of a viable strategy. He then remembered old calls to unity from the Frontline States and the OAU. As he thought about it, he forgot all about previous claims he had made that ZANU was a splinter party of no political importance, and instead led the tatters of his faction in an approach to ZANU, pleading the necessity for some sort of a unity agreement.

ZANU itself was at that stage reasonably united, but most importantly it was actually focused on fighting the war. While a coup in ZAPU was obviously to ZANU’s ultimate benefit, Chitepo and the ZANU leadership could not at the same time appear to be ignoring any genuine overtures to unity. It was also unfortunate for ZANU that Chikerema succeeded in attracting a few its members to his side, principal among whom were Nathan Shamuyarira and Godfrey Savanhu. This dilution precipitated a split in ZANU that in turn gave birth to a third political party, FROLIZI, or the ‘Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe’. FROLIZI was formally launched on 1 October 1971, at more or less the same time as the centrists of both parties were uniting within Rhodesia to form the African National Council.

In theory, FROLIZI ought to have superseded both ZAPU and ZANU, and to support this position, Chikerema claimed to be in possession of a ‘letter’ from Nkomo stating that he had been in contact with Sithole and that both men had agreed to step down in favour of Robert Mugabe. Chikerema also maintained that Chitepo had received a similar letter, but he denied its existence to preserve his own power ambitions.

FROLIZI, however, was immediately denounced by both ZANU and a reconstituted ZAPU, although its formation was well received in the OAU, where it was accepted as an authentic ‘unity’ party. Thanks to this, ZANU was forced to come around, and in a press statement issued on 7 October 1971, a new party was grudgingly accepted, although any suggestion that ZANU had been superseded was loudly repudiated. While the ZANU leadership also warned against any hasty recognition of FROLIZI by the OAU, the OAU had been pressing for a bipartisan front for some time and generally welcomed developments. In light of this ZANU issued a second press release. “The OAU,” it said, “and all states sympathetic to the liberation of Zimbabwe must resist the temptation to recognise one movement as the sole vehicle for liberation, and therefore, the only one to be considered for aid.”

Indeed, this was at the root of the issue for both sides. Recognition by the OAU had long been denied to ZANU, which was ironic because it was ZANU alone that was engaged actively in the Armed Struggle. While ZANLA fought, FROLIZI pondered strategy from a safe distance. Chikerema, however, acknowledged that OAU recognition would come only on the heels of action in the field, but he was slow to act, claiming that his fighters were being ‘systematically’ deployed after extensive ‘scientific’ analysis. Ultimately, the only recorded FROLIZI action of the war was the murder of a Wedza farmer, and after some nine months of its existence, FROLIZI largely disappeared.

However, in March 1973, a Joint Military Command was formed in terms of an OAU decree that obliged the three liberation movements to declare their loyalty to a single command structure. All three swore to this, but their fingers were crossed behind their backs, and the organ never really functioned. In the end, things returned more-or-less to normal with FROLIZI and ZAPU doing very little and ZANU continuing to fight the war more or less alone. FROLIZI became a victim of its own irrelevance, and so did Chikerema. In due course, the ZANU deserters re-joined the party on the understanding that none could hold an elected office for two years, and by 1974 FROLIZI was effectively dead.

In the meanwhile, whatever external contradictions there might have been, the centrists of both parties inside Rhodesia voted to preserve the composition of the African National Council. It had not so far been banned, and Bishop Abel Muzorewa appeared, if not exactly a rival to the

established nationalist leadership, then at least he was a credible voice in a political vacuum. For Smith, this was in some ways fortunate, for he would have found it very difficult to follow Home's advice without an internal leader or organisation with which to engage.

As Smith relates the story, Muzorewa emerged from the startling success of the 1972 'No' campaign with improved confidence and enhanced ambition. It was agreed by the ANC leadership that the mandate of the party would be extended, but there was much internal disagreement as to what direction it should take. A section of the growing black middle class was willing to accept the 1971 proposals, on the grounds that the 'No' vote had been emotionally inspired, and was unfortunate. After a reasonable cooling off period, it was widely argued that most blacks would probably see sense in accepting the terms. There were others who felt that the 'No' vote had been provisional and was intended only as a negotiating position. Yet others held that the situation was far too preliminary for there to be any proposals at all. How, it was asked, could there ever be a formula acceptable to the Rhodesian people *as a whole* when at that stage a *whole* did not exist? The people of the country were either black or white, and what pleased one could be relied upon to displease the other. It was felt that far more pressure was needed before Rhodesian whites would even begin to ponder genuine parity, let alone majority rule.

By early 1973, however, a degree of consensus appeared to be emerging. Among the rank and file, a majority felt that the ANC leadership ought to be doing more to engage the government. Smith himself was also heard to ponder why the ANC had made no direct approaches to his government since the departure of the Pearce Commission. Muzorewa indicated that he would like to do so, but was hampered by internal opposition. Smith helped clear the way by arresting and locking up the main hardliners, and while Muzorewa protested weakly, it did work in his favour, and he resolved to move forward regardless. "The need of our country to return to normality," he remarked, "and to reach an honourable settlement is greater than the temporary suffering of our brothers."

So it was that on 17 June 1973 the first official meeting between he and Smith took place in an atmosphere of frank exchange. Muzorewa formally pressed a list of eight demands, and a fortnight later Smith formally rejected them. Neither man was particularly dismayed since high on the list was a demand for the repeal of the Land Tenure Act. Then there

was immediate parity in Parliament, the urgent release of all political detainees and an amnesty for all members of ZANU and ZAPU based abroad. These, Smith carped, with the weariness of a schoolmaster who had spoken for the thousandth time, added up to nothing less than the old parrot cry of ‘one man, one vote’.

Smith’s position was that the 1971 proposals, as they currently stood, were non-negotiable. Soon afterwards, a further twenty senior officials of the ANC were arrested, and a political meeting due to be addressed by Muzorewa was banned. Despite all of this, Muzorewa declared himself still in favour of talks, and a fortnight later he and Smith released a combined press statement that read as follows:

> The Prime Minister and Bishop Muzorewa met on 17 August 1973 to discuss the question of the constitutional settlement. The Prime Minister gave Bishop Muzorewa a solemn undertaking on behalf of the Government of Rhodesia that if the 1971 proposals for a settlement are ratified, they will be fully honoured by the Government. Bishop Muzorewa accepted the undertaking and stated that he had complete trust in the Prime Minister. In these circumstances Bishop Muzorewa in his capacity as President of the African National Council gave an undertaking that he accepted the 1971 proposals for a settlement, and that he would urge the British Government, on behalf of the African people, to implement the proposals.

A few days later, as the arrest of nine more ANC officials was announced, Muzorewa and Smith appeared together to announce that they had agreed on a set of principles that would lead to an equitable solution to Rhodesia’s problems. The principles again fell some way short of majority rule, and again it was evident that compromise was simply not wired into Smith’s DNA. Muzorewa was prepared to accept parity as a working alternative to majority rule, but the meaning of parity in this particular context was not defined. He did manage to wrest a further six parliamentary seats in addition to the sixteen black members already sitting, plus the possibility of a further six after a period of review. All of this was put to the ANC executive at a meeting held in Highfield, and was swiftly rejected. This was announced by firebrand ANC Publicity Secretary Edson Sithole, who, quite predictably, was arrested soon afterwards.

Word of these negotiations was, of course, not particularly well received by the exiled leadership. The three parties were by then in the thick of their own internal trauma, so their response was muted and did not materially alter the direction of the ANC's developing policy. It was only in March when the opinion of the ZANU executive in Salisbury Prison was heard that the rug was finally and brutally pulled from under Muzorewa's feet. The statement read as follows:

> We have been receiving persistent reports that the ANC's stand in negotiations falls far short of majority-rule-now, and all the other traditional nationalist demands. Working on the assumption that such reports are correct, we ourselves here are inclined to look upon the ANC and its involvement in negotiations as disastrous and posing the greatest threat to African political interests in a situation currently being militarily improved in the African's favour and which ought to be left to mature for our maximum exploitation when the regime and its supporters are sufficiently ground down to yield meaningfully.

All the ZANU leaders in Salisbury prison, including Ndabaningi Sithole, signed the statement. In respect to the moral authority of ZANU, no more contacts were reported between Smith and Muzorewa until 1975, by which time circumstances had altered considerably.

9
The Spiral of Terror and a Bloodless Coup

Personalities and fame pass; the revolution must remain – **Samora Machel**

Until late in 1973, the Rhodesian intelligence services had tended to view the security situation in Mozambique in terms of containment. As 1974 commenced, however, the position became so drastically altered that they were forced to acknowledge a probable collapse. This was a dire state of affairs. The implications for Rhodesia of a Portuguese defeat in Mozambique did not bear thinking about. With the addition of 600-miles or more of hostile border, the situation in Rhodesia would escalate overnight from status quo to unwinnable war.

Ken Flower was amazed, as he always seemed to be, at how determined Smith and his cabinet were in resisting the truth. First, they rejected the inevitability of ZANU cooperation with FRELIMO in Tete, then they swore that the blacks of the northeast were loyal, and now it seemed that they were determined to ignore an imminent collapse in Mozambique. And it was not as if there was any shortage of concrete evidence. By the end of 1973, the initial deployment of one military company in the Operation *Hurricane* area had grown to twenty, and this did not include additional air and intelligence support as well as the SAP units. Rhodesian Security Force casualties, of course, were mounting, and by April 1974, forty-five deaths had been recorded in the armed services Roll of Honour. A handful of these were road or air accidents, and a number caused by landmines, but most were deaths in action. Of these, twenty-eight were white and the remainder black. White civilians were also contributing to their own column of statistics. With the widespread use of landmines, commercial and security traffic in the northeast had so diminished that it had begun to adversely affect the economy. Random farm attacks were also increasing in frequency, making the northeast a hazardous place to live and work.

These security concerns, however, generated a boom in the fencing industry countrywide and triggered a surge of creative engineering that produced some of the most memorable icons of the Rhodesian War. In the beginning, conventional farm vehicles were merely packed with sandbags

to limit the effect of a landmine blast. However, powerful Russian and Chinese anti-tank mines continued to claim lives, and to combat this, the police, and later various engineering concerns scattered around the country began producing such classics as the Rhino ambush and mine-protected vehicle.

The Rhino, designed by Chief Inspector Don Hollingsworth, was a Land Rover chassis upon which the standard cab and flatbed had been replaced with a heavily armoured pod and roll bars. This concept proved to be very effective against both landmines and the increasing incidence of roadside ambushes. Soon Rhodesian roads were filled with a variety of similar vehicles, some homemade and some manufactured, with the various designs carrying names such as Hyena, Leopard, Crocodile and Hippo.

Despite all of this, ambushes and landmines remained a deadly hazard throughout the northeast. As the war progressed, barely a day went by without news of this one or that one surviving or succumbing to an ambush or a landmine blast. Ordinary civilian vehicles, of course, were highly vulnerable to both, and again it was farm workshops that came to the rescue. Many unique solutions were devised that were eventually narrowed down to a few standards. One was the use of multiple firing barrels arranged in a variety of configurations that were then mounted onto cars, trucks and pickups. Each barrel was primed with a 12-gauge buckshot cartridge, and in case of an ambush, could lay down a brief but devastating curtain of fire.

Such was the day-to-day life of whites struggling to survive in the hostile northeast. Home security equally taxed the creativity of backcountry farmers. Screens were fitted across windows to inhibit the casual tossing in of hand grenades. The perimeter of the homestead was typically tightly corralled with barbed wire and diamond mesh security fence. A kill zone carved out of the bush beyond could be illuminated by powerful security lights at the flick of a switch. The price of menacing dogs was high, and Rottweiler, Doberman or Rhodesian Ridgeback puppies were usually booked several litters in advance. Police Reserve patrols mounted by local men linked together all homesteads into a central control system based at a local police camp. Agric Alert was a simple but very useful radio link that allowed for some communication, a regular morning and evening roll call and a panic button. An occasional addition to standard homestead security was a series of forty-five-gallon fuel drums arranged along the perimeter

and packed with a mixture of explosives, concrete and odds and ends of scrap metal. An electronic trigger could wholly or selectively detonate these homemade bombs that were capable of killing everything, including dogs, horses and cattle within a radius of 100 yards or more. In most cases, an outside bunker, fortified with sandbags was also available for the last stand against attackers.

With all this going on, white farmers, soldiers and the Government were not impressed when the Catholic Church raised its voice to comment on the rising incidence of Security Force violence against black civilians. Bishop of Umtali, Donal Lamont, aggravated an already chary white parish by describing the racism in Rhodesia as a 'pernicious heresy'. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace alleged torture, assaults and destruction of property, charges that were forcefully denied by the Government, as were calls for an independent inquiry because those injured by such action had full recourse to the law.

The Government also claimed, with some justification, that Catholic exposure of violence in the northeast was one-sided, and neglected to mention the regular and horrendous acts of political torture and terrorism that were daily perpetrated by the guerrilla factions against their own people. In 1974, the Ministry of Information released a propaganda leaflet entitled 'Anatomy of Terror', that illustrated in graphic terms the reality of terrorist activity in the countryside. The text began with the admission that 'this is not a pretty book', and indeed it was not. A gallery of ghoulish imagery depicting some of the worst incidents of torture and savagery committed on the frontline awakened the darkest fears of suburban white expatriates. This was black on black violence, and it was wanton, depraved and deeply disturbing.

Unfortunately, the Rhodesian Government's plea of being a civilised minority confronting a communist invasion was sometimes smudged by legal, but nonetheless questionable acts. In May 1973, for example, three guerrillas involved in the Altena and Whistlefield farm attacks were sentenced to death for those attacks, and for the murder of Corporal Norman Moore who was killed in the subsequent landmine blast. Appeals and protests were loud, with ZANU arguing that Moore had died by an act of war and that the three guerrillas should be deemed prisoners of war. This argument was dismissed, although ultimately the men were not hanged.

Donal Lamont himself almost fell victim to the same device that had killed Corporal Moore. He had become such a thorn in the flesh of the Rhodesian Government that at some level of the security services the decision was made to kill him. Acting on intelligence that he was about to embark on a programme of visits to Catholic missions in the southeast, Special Branch arranged for a landmine to be placed in the road he would travel. God was with his servant that day, however, and Lamont stopped his VW Beetle a few hundred meters shy of the mine to chat to some children. A mine-protected troop carrier passed him, continued up the road and was destroyed in the subsequent explosion. Thanks to an inch of armour plate, however, no Rhodesian soldiers lost their lives. Donal Lamont was soon after that prosecuted under the 'Terrorism Act' and deported.

In the meanwhile, white Rhodesia was slowly beginning to take warnings seriously that the ancient flame of Portuguese occupied Mozambique was guttering. As the first quarter of 1974 drew to a close, Ken Flower found himself flagging, his spirits challenged by months of futile diplomacy, travelling between Salisbury, Pretoria and Lisbon preaching a threat that he knew was coming. He found the Portuguese stalwart in their refusal to yield, but at the same time overwhelmed. South Africa remained inert and fatalistic, torn between the inevitability of a Portuguese collapse and a need to turn back the tide. The region seemed frozen in hiatus as the inevitable events of African liberation played out around it.

Then something happened that would galvanise all manner of initiatives and manoeuvres, but which would also shift the balance in Mozambique unalterably in the direction of collapse. On 24 April 1974, Ken Flower's aircraft was the last to leave Lisbon airport on the eve of a bloodless military coup. This event of major international significance became known as the 'Carnation Revolution', for the fact that soldiers of the *Estado Novo* were greeted on the streets of Lisbon by crowds carrying red carnations, indicating overwhelming popular support for what was, in effect, a revolution.

The Portuguese Government chose to occupy Portugal's colonies beyond the 1960s primarily to maintain its status as a global power. It was, of course, an illusion that involved Portugal in costly wars not only in Mozambique but also in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde. These conflicts served no real purpose in a changing

world, but they did spark the coup that left an enormous question mark over the future of Portuguese military campaigning in Africa. A disaffected military, wary of sending young men to die overseas for no tangible reason, chose this moment to act. It was now past the time when Rhodesia could effectively influence either the military or the political situation in Mozambique, and all that she could do now was wait, hope and wonder.

Samora Machel

10
The Men of Steel

Whoever relaxes vigilance will disarm himself politically and land himself in a passive position – **Mao Tse Tung**

White Rhodesia initially took comfort in the hope that the loss of Mozambique, although regrettable, need not necessarily be fatal. South Africa was the regional superpower, and despite Pretoria being a little slow on the uptake in matters of mutual security, pundits were confident that the fall of Mozambique would change this. So far, South African military assistance had been offered to Rhodesia without strings attached. The operational brilliance of the Rhodesian Army and the splendid little war that it was fighting was the cause of much envy among sister units in South Africa. For the chance to participate and gain operational experience, South African commanders were quite often willing to deploy their elite men to Rhodesia without the authority, and at times even without the knowledge of their Government. While this helped a great deal and was never unappreciated, Rhodesia needed massive military assistance from South Africa to really clean up the region, but curiously this had never been offered.

Manifestly this must now change, and no other subject of conversation was to be heard across the length and breadth of Rhodesia. South Africa would at last weigh-in in support of her brethren, holding the white line at the Zambezi River. John Vorster, indeed, was due in Salisbury for talks with Ian Smith, and it was widely anticipated that he would take the opportunity to roll out some sort of revised security policy for the region. In the Rhodesian nationalist camp, expectations were likewise, and Muzorewa was advised to take a step back from his negotiations with the Smith regime to see how the new security map of the region would be drawn.

Abruptly, however, this mood of calm of expectation was disturbed when the extreme right of Smith's parliamentary caucus hatched an unexpected rebellion. A noisy faction led by RF party chairman Des Frost advocated taking the war directly to the enemy. It was necessary at this point to give the insurgents, then visibly massing in the Tete Province, a sound thrashing so that any talk of a negotiated settlement in the future

would be backed by a few hard facts. While a political rebellion of this nature was not viewed particularly kindly in the country, most whites agreed that some sort of vigorous and salutary action against the forces of liberation was overdue. Smith was certainly among these, but as he prepared to lead the country into uncharted territory, he was not about to let his parliamentary majority slip away. On 31 July 1974, he took the country to the polls, proving once again that when push came to shove the electorate was still behind him. The Rhodesian Front, indeed, was rewarded with yet another clean sweep of every white parliamentary seat.

Thus, when John Vorster made his appearance in Salisbury just a few days later, Ian Smith was girded and confident. With military and security matters foremost in his mind, he was prepared to insist that the time had come for South Africa to commit to the fight. Despite a glaring lack of mutual affection, Smith was confident that good sense would prevail, and for the sake of the common good, he was prepared to put aside his personal feelings and place his leadership at the disposal of the South Africans.

Prime Minister John Vorster was a heavy-featured, ponderous man, of slow speech, but clear minded and with nimble intelligence. He was a comparative liberal, but given, perhaps a little like Harold Wilson, to place too great an emphasis on political theory and ideology. As the two men settled in, Smith was quickly alerted to an air of discomfort surrounding the topic of military and economic support. Vorster seemed not to be listening to the tough talk, and consequently, that part of the meeting was brief. Smith soon found himself doing much more of the listening than the talking, and as Vorster warmed to his theme, Smith began to find himself almost at a loss for words.

Vorster began to enlarge on a theme of cooperation and common markets in Africa, explaining to his stunned counterpart that the current realpolitik of Africa, in his opinion, did not countenance war. If the white man was to remain viable on the continent, he explained, it would be through capital, political integration and trade. As he spoke, Vorster gazed into the middle distance, where he seemed to see the ghosts of Cecil Rhodes, Jan Smuts and Godfrey Huggins. His vision of a grand political union was different only in that he saw it as a commonwealth, held firm by the substantial economic ballast of Pretoria, and sailing north into the dark infinity of Black Africa under the flag of ‘détente’.

At the core of détente lay John Vorster's hope that if he were perceived in black Africa to be an honest broker over the Rhodesia question, then South Africa's own racial policies might be overlooked. For this not to appear juvenile in its naivety, it ought to be remembered that the South African economic machine was vastly superior to anything else in Africa. By necessity, most countries to the north were economically involved in some way with South Africa, even though it was in everybody's interest to keep this fact a secret. Although Vorster was probably not blind to the fact that political ideology could at times override common sense and self-interest, he thought the odds at that point in history were fair enough to give it a try.

Smith, of course, knew nothing of this beforehand, and to have the news broken to him thus, when he had all but guaranteed to his constituency that South Africa would now come onside, was brutal almost beyond endurance. Ken Flower stated in his memoirs that his South African opposite number had for some time been urging him to make it known to Smith that Vorster was working towards achieving a 'solution' for Rhodesia. Such a solution was vital before South Africa itself was backed into a corner over the future of South West Africa. It is unlikely that Flower failed to pass this message on to Smith, and therefore it is strange that Smith in his own memoirs claimed no prior knowledge of it. Stranger still was the fact that behind the scenes, work towards achieving détente had been going on for some time, and not a word of it, at least according to Smith, had reached his ears.

Vorster, in the meanwhile, felt quite sensibly that of all the regional black leaders, it was Kenneth Kaunda who was most likely to be receptive to his scheme, and in the early days of Zambian independence, he worked hard behind the scenes to try and improve relations with Lusaka. In reply, Kaunda laced a conspicuously hostile response with bold criticism of South Africa's apartheid policy. This, however, was nothing more than political posturing, and Kaunda was indeed a good choice of starting point. Although typical of his species in trying to consolidate power and crush democratic opposition, Kaunda was not overtly corrupt, and his desire to see Zambia prosper was entirely genuine. Bridge building and peace-making were also components of his personal philosophy, gleaned no doubt from his devotion to the likes of Gandhi, the Dalai Llama and Doctor Martin Luther King. By the middle of 1968, his hostility began to cool, and he was prepared to

concede that solutions proposed for Rhodesia were not necessarily applicable to South Africa. To this he added enigmatically that although a white victory in Rhodesia was now impossible, a black victory was not necessarily desirable.

Détente was born alongside the first whispers of the revolution in Mozambique, and to these Kenneth Kaunda was among the first to be alerted. In September or October of 1973, he was contacted by the British peer Lord Colyton, who in turn introduced him to a group of dissident officers of the Portuguese Army. It was from these men that Kaunda was given some advance warning that the military situation in Portuguese Africa was approaching a critical point and that a collapse was inevitable sooner rather than later. Kaunda's help was requested in this regard in negotiating a truce with the nationalists, of whom FRELIMO was identified as being just one. Sensing correctly that Samora Machel, the FRELIMO leader, would accept no solution short of complete military victory, Kaunda demurred and kept it all to himself.

He did, however, have an inkling that if the information was leaked, it might stir up some useful panic in South Africa, and so he passed it on to Lonrho chairman Tiny Rowland, with whom he was on good terms. Rowland, a significant player on the continent, was uncommonly well connected among all of its leading plutocrats. He duly passed the information on to fellow Lonrho director Marquard de Villiers, who happened to be a personal friend of John Vorster, and over a game of golf, de Villiers casually briefed Vorster. He however somewhat exaggerated the situation to the extent of assuring Vorster that a new constitutional blueprint was already on the table. Vorster had less than a month to digest this news before the predicted political collapse in Lisbon took place.

The Portuguese coup certainly added urgency to Vorster's quest for a solution in Rhodesia, and at the same time, it further softened Kaunda's view of détente. The fact that a white victory in Rhodesia was now impossible, and a black victory undesirable, suggested to Vorster that Kaunda was thinking about some sort of middle ground. This was precisely the language of détente, and Vorster was happy to hear it. The fact, however, that Samora Machel had led FRELIMO to an almost complete military victory in Mozambique suggested certain things about his nature that did not bode well. The name 'Machel' spread through a hero-hungry

black population of South Africa like wildfire, and the rise of another charismatic autocrat in Rhodesia was to be avoided at all costs.

These developments caused John Vorster to think deeply. Quite obviously Kaunda was now presenting himself as the moderate voice of black Africa, and this again made Lusaka the perfect bridgehead between South Africa and the glowering black masses north of the Zambezi. That, however, was the good news. The bad news was that Smith was a white Samora Machel, with a name that resonated with equal cachet. Call a toast to Ian Smith in any bar from Table Mountain to the Orkney Islands and glasses would be raised in salutation. Before Smith could upset the whole balance from within, Vorster had to find some way to ease him out.

As far as future policy towards Mozambique was concerned, South Africa had two critical factors to consider. The first was that migrant labour from Mozambique made up about twenty-five per cent of the workforce on the mines of the Witwatersrand, and the second was an uninterrupted flow of power from the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric plant. Another, although somewhat lesser consideration was that the port facilities of Lourenço Marques provided an essential overflow for South Africa's own busy ports. There was little to be gained, therefore, by upsetting any of these traditional areas of cooperation between the two countries.

Consequently, Vorster concluded that a hostile South African attitude towards a Marxist takeover in Mozambique would be counterproductive, so he had no choice but to consider constructive engagement. There were so many paradoxes in this situation, however, that at times it seemed hard to keep up. In a quid pro quo with Mozambique, it did not take a genius to predict that South Africa would put Rhodesia on the table. Ultimately Mozambique had as much, if not more to lose than South Africa by drawing an ideological frontline, so again things looked grim for Rhodesia. That Kaunda would be delighted to see an end to continuous Rhodesian attacks against his country also went without saying.

As he listened to all this, some facts *prima facie* and others implied, Ian Smith felt the ground lurch beneath his feet. He could hardly believe what he was hearing. As Vorster sketched out his vision, Smith heard an echo of the old parrot-cry, and it was coming from where he least expected it. Conciliation and compromise, two words that Smith had no use for, underlined John Vorster vision, and he assured his incredulous host that it

was these two concepts that would usher in a new era of peace and cooperation in southern Africa.

What did all of this mean? To Ian Smith, it mostly meant the end of any immediate plans to escalate the war. With Mozambique on the brink, South Africa was Rhodesia's only ally, and as bleak as the garden path might have looked to him, Smith had no choice but to follow the South African leader down it. Before he took the first step, however, he tried his luck with a different plan.

While in Lisbon on the eve of the coup, Ken Flower unearthed a scheme under discussion by senior members of the military intelligence establishment. These were among a minority who believed that the new military government had conceded too much too quickly. They were proposing as an alternative a plan to divide Mozambique into two separate cantons. FRELIMO could have all of the country north of the Zambezi, while to the south the Portuguese would form a federation with both Rhodesia and South Africa, or perhaps better still, an enlarged southern African superstate. Smith grasped this straw despite Flower advising him that he personally judged the moment to have passed. The Portuguese Government was already in negotiation with FRELIMO, and a visible momentum towards a handover was now underway between two willing partners. FRELIMO wanted power, and the Portuguese wanted to give it to them. How could a federation, or any sort of complicated redrawing of the map of Africa ever be taken seriously?

Vorster certainly did not take it seriously. As Smith assured him that the Portuguese were 'onsides' he listened uncomfortably, promising Smith that he would take the idea back to Pretoria and run it past his Cabinet. With that, the meeting was wrapped up, and despite Smith tugging on his coattails from time to time over the next few months, no further encouragement to the idea was offered.

On the battlefield, in the meanwhile, the intensity of reprisal and counter-reprisal grew, and as manpower shortages in the armed services became critical, any and every type of force multiplier was considered. One of the most successful strategies of the Rhodesian War was the use of pseudo operations in the form of the famous Selous Scouts Regiment. Formed to gather intelligence by the use of turned guerrillas and white, special force handlers, the Selous Scouts was responsible a disproportionate kill rate after its founding in 1973. The Selous Scouts was an army

formation, but a creation of Special Branch, and initially its pseudo operations were low key and secret, although in due course it developed notoriety that tended to give it a higher profile than it perhaps deserved.

Besides pseudo-operations, the Selous Scouts and Special Branch were behind quite a number of other creative and successful force multiplying schemes. One such turned the tables on the terrorist's tendency to rob rural stores. Operatives fitted transistor radios, much coveted by guerrillas in the field, with secret homing transmitters effective within a radius of thirty miles. The transmitters were usually only active when the radios were turned off, which meant that any follow up could be conducted in the reasonably sure knowledge that the guerrillas were asleep. This theme was developed a little further when a charge of plastic explosive was fitted into each radio so that when the on/off switch was activated a prescribed number of times, the charge would detonate. These were called 'road runners' after the popular cartoon series of the time, during which the Wily Coyote frequently tended to blow himself up.

Exploding bicycles was a tactic the Selous Scout successfully used during occasional cross-border raids. Bicycles packed with explosives were left lying around in Gaza to be picked up by FRELIMO patrols. Usually, the devices were detonated by weight on the saddle or ringing the bell, and before FRELIMO and ZANLA fighters got wise to it, a good number were despatched. The fact that civilians also fell victim to these ruses spoiled only slightly the pleasure of hearing that many high-profile guerrillas had been taken out. As an initial entry into chemical warfare, the Rhodesians poisoned natural waterholes in the dry southeast of the country. The hope was that more than the handful of guerrillas who had so far died of thirst on the long dry march in from Gaza would succumb to poison. The rains broke not long afterwards, however, and the scheme was abandoned.

To spread the use of chemical warfare into the broader conflict, the security services had their own homegrown 'Doctor Death' to call on. Bob Symington, professor of surgery at the University of Rhodesia, was an amateur toxicologist with a small but well-equipped laboratory in his Borrowdale home. He was also a high-ranking territorial officer, and as such had a direct connection to the Ministry of Defence. As early as the last quarter of 1974, Symington was working with the MOD to devise a system of exterminating guerrillas using various poisons. At the same time, authorisation was handed down to the CIO to commence a top-secret

programme to deploy these chemical weapons. Ken Flower was Director General of the CIO, and answerable only to the Prime Minister, so if Flower was *au fait* with the operation, so must Smith have been. The chemical warfare programme was placed under the aegis of the Selous Scouts and installed at the Bindura Fort to keep it from prying eyes.

The first application of this tactic was to impregnate clothing with parathion, an organophosphate absorbed into the bloodstream through hair follicles. A person wearing a treated article of clothing such as jeans, a t-shirt or underpants could be expected to die within four or five days. Poisoned clothing, tinned meats and soft drinks were supplied to ZANLA contact men via pseudo guerrilla groups. Consumables were laced with thallium, a poison that attacks the peripheral nervous system. Thallium, incidentally, was also a favourite of chemist-turned-crime-writer Agatha Christie. Cigarettes were occasionally poisoned by treating the filters with anthrax spores.

By the middle of 1977, it had become quite clear that Rhodesia was not winning the war, and as a consequence, the chemical programme was expanded. Special Branch distributed poisoned food and clothing in a highly secret operation that utilised rural stores commonly raided by insurgents. Storekeepers were usually not informed, and consequently, quite a few accidental deaths were recorded in the general population. In June 1977, The Operations Coordinating Committee requested the officer commanding Special Branch to provide detailed figures for deaths of guerrillas that could be attributed to poisoning. The statistics supplied indicated that 809 individuals had succumbed to this method in a six month period. Many members of Special Branch believed that more guerrillas were being accounted for by chemical means than by conventional military operations.

Biological attacks were also part of the strategy and claimed an unknown but significant number of lives. The Selous Scouts introduced cholera bacteria into the water supply for the FRELIMO and ZANLA camps at Madulo Pan not far from Malvernia. By sabotaging pumps and pipelines, the Selous Scouts forced the guerrillas to use this tainted ground water. Unaccountable cholera outbreaks were reported in various parts of Rhodesia, however, as a consequence of ongoing deployments and the natural spread of the disease.

Anthrax was also used by the Selous Scouts to infect cattle in the Malvernia area. The spore would then be passed on to humans consuming the meat. The distribution of anthrax was carefully controlled in Gaza lest infections move to the Kruger National Park to the detriment of wildlife, and South African goodwill. Selous Scouts intelligence officer Jim Parker, in his book *Assignment Selous Scouts*, confirms that anthrax was deployed in Matabeleland north to infect or kill cattle, to deprive infiltrating ZIPRA forces of food. Veterinary Department personnel, unaware that the Scouts were responsible, had a tough time containing outbreaks in the Tribal Trust Lands. The disease, of course, was more easily controlled on white ranches where there was better access and security.

By the end of 1979, the isolation unit at Gwelo Hospital was overflowing with cases of anthrax poisoning. Patients from Lower Gwelo, Que Que, Zhombe, Gokwe, Selukwe, Shangani, even some from as far away as Fort Victoria were receiving treatment. A total of 10,753 cases of anthrax poisoning were recorded between 1979 and 1980, with 182 confirmed deaths. These figures were compiled from treated cases, and in reality must have been much higher. Either way, they far exceeded cases recorded in the rest of the world combined.

For Ken Flower, these grim realities of the moment were brightened a little by a trip to Portugal in the company of the then Rhodesian Minister of Defence. In September, invitations were sent from Lisbon to both Salisbury and Pretoria asking each country to send a senior official and a minister to Portugal to be briefed on Portugal's future overseas policy. The South African delegation included Foreign Minister Brand Fourie and the head of the South African Bureau of State Security General Hendrik van den Bergh. Ken Flower was accompanied by the urbane and entertaining Pieter Kenyon Fleming-Voltelyn van der Byl, known simply as P.K., recently appointed to the dual portfolios of defence and foreign affairs.

P.K. was an interesting character and something of a remnant of the old honourable and military. A flamboyant and colourful hardliner, his public antics and social credentials placed him at the very centre of the local elite, although as a politician his accomplishments were mixed. Although born and bred in South Africa, he affected the airs and graces of an English gentleman, which caused not infrequent offence in South Africa and England. His first cabinet position had been as Smith's Deputy Minister for Information, where he proved his commitment to the concept of UDI by

zealously applying press censorship and streamlining the public media in the direction of Rhodesian independence.

His relationship with Smith was a close, but a curious one. Since Smith himself was known for a conspicuous lack of personal charisma, and P.K. was often presented as the official and unofficial spokesman of Government, doing nothing to dispel the general impression that the Rhodesian Government was being run by the lunatic fringe. British journalist Max Hastings, then reporting on Rhodesia for the Evening Standard, described van der Byl as an 'appalling' individual, and ventured to add that he and Smith would both have been comical were it not for the fact that they held the power of life or death over so many people. Within a fortnight of this, Hastings was on an aircraft back to London.

With his flamboyance, artifice and imperium, P.K. was frequently lampooned and derided both within the country and without, but he never seemed to care, and remained a much-loved Rhodesian character throughout the UDI period. This applied particularly on the frontline where he mingled freely with the rough and ready contingents of Rhodesian fighting men. As Minister of Defence, he made a regular point of visiting with the troops, and on such occasions would be choppered into a forward base dressed in immaculately pressed battle fatigues, occasionally sporting a rifle, but more frequently a swagger stick and a bottle or two of imported whisky. As he addressed the assembled troops with a tumbler of Scotch in one hand and a Dunhill cigarette in the other, he would effuse with such Churchillian flourish as: "If the battle should wax fiercer, there can be no question of surrender. We shall contest every river, every crossroads, every village, every town and every kopje." With that, he would rock back on his heels and grin from ear to ear. The officers would discreetly hide their smiles while the men of the ranks would roar with laughter, and that, it seemed, was all that really mattered.

In many ways, P.K. spoke for precisely what the whole business of white Rhodesia was all about. He offered a lesson to his compatriots that, no matter what was done, or what was said, or who was killed or maimed along the way, none of it was to be taken too seriously. As Dutch journalist and military historian Dan van der Vat somewhat over-dramatically stated in van der Byl's 1999 obituary: "UDI had been a bit of a lark, to be enjoyed while it lasted and shrugged off when it failed. Despite the deaths of thousands of Africans at the hands of white Rhodesian troops and police,

resisting the inevitable, van der Byl, no less than Smith and their atavistic cronies, got clean away with it."

Sadly, however, undeniable evidence that the whole jolly edifice was beginning to crumble was all that van der Byl and Flower were able to bring back with them from Portugal. The series of meetings held in Lisbon were humourless, sober and depressing. The Rhodesian and South African delegations were told by Overseas Minister Doctor Costa Almeida that Portugal now regarded her position in Africa as untenable, and the current policy regarding Mozambique was to negotiate the best possible deal and get out. He added, somewhat naively that, in his view, nothing of consequence would change. Predicting that most Portuguese nationals would remain in Mozambique, he assured the Rhodesians that current relationships in the region could be preserved without difficulty.

This, however, was manifestly not going to happen. The Rhodesian property market was booming with a sudden influx of Portuguese refugees flooding into the country, and the same was true for South Africa. Flower, who was a Portuguese speaker and familiar with the rat holes of Lisbon, sought out a prostitute and asked her what the common man thought of the overseas empire. During the course of the evening, she introduced him to many ordinary people who supported the view that the nation would be better off without the empire. Later, seeming somehow to have missed the gravity of the moment, van der Byl urged Flower to slip a pornographic magazine into General van den Bergh's luggage, hoping that it would be confiscated by customs at Jan Smuts Airport to the latter's consternation. Flower demurred, although the story circulated to the amusement of Parliament and members of Salisbury Club for quite a long time. In fact, it proved to be the only cheerful part of the whole depressing business.

An agreement negotiated between the Portuguese Government and FRELIMO was signed into existence in Lusaka on 7 September 1974, just five months after the coup. The accord made provision for a transitional government that, with desperate haste, was sworn in a fortnight later. Mozambique was to be administered under the caretaker leadership of FRELIMO's Paris representative Joaquim Chissano in preparation for a formal handover.

A few months later, however, an attempted right-wing coup by disillusioned whites in Lourenço Marques upset an uneasy peace, precipitating a brief slaughter of Portuguese nationals before the survivors

fled the territory. Behind them, they left economic and infrastructural ruin, from which Mozambique never really recovered. FRELIMO inherited six Alouette helicopters that were handed over to the new air force by the Portuguese, but these did not remain in Mozambique for long. Disgruntled Portuguese pilots flew them across the border into Rhodesia and handed them over for an undisclosed sum in hard currency.

As indigenisation took root in Mozambique, white Rhodesians found themselves peering over the ramparts of the Eastern Highlands to the sight of blacks making their own decisions and running affairs all over the country. For Rhodesian whites, impromptu visits to the white beaches, the best game fishing in the world, the fattest prawns and the *Vinho Verde,* pleasures that once accounted for so much of the good life, were now a thing of the past. Not for the first time in recent months, white Rhodesians began to wonder if there really was a future for them in Africa.

In the wake of this, another dark chapter began, presaged by visiting South African Foreign Minister Dr Hilgard Muller, who arrived in Salisbury ostensibly to report on the progress of détente. Muller's visit followed the same pattern as Vorster's had before him, and he and Smith sat in the same congenial surroundings of Government House and exchanged the usual pleasantries. Muller was conspicuously lavish in his praise of Rhodesian political maturity, and in this *sotto voce* manner, appraised Smith on how well Vorster was doing with his détente efforts, and how pleased he was with Rhodesian cooperation. All of this circumlocution, however, alerted Smith immediately to the fact that something unpleasant was coming.

The success of détente was premised on Kaunda's desperation for an end to ongoing Rhodesian attacks against Zambia. Although Smith had gone out of his way to be accommodating in this regard, by not authorising any attacks, it was now required of him to move a little further, to give Kaunda what he needed to force Nkomo and Sithole to the negotiating table. If Kaunda was to deal with these two men, he needed them to be in Lusaka, which meant that Smith would have to release all the leading nationalists from detention and allow them to leave the country.

Smith's heart sank, but this was the stark reality of the situation, and Hilgard Muller sat back to give his host a moment to digest the tasteless fact. As unpalatable as it all was, Muller nevertheless had every reason to suppose that Smith would fall into line. To drive home the point, Muller threw in a couple of further points for Smith to chew over. South African

Railways carried the vast bulk of Rhodesian imports and exports, and indeed, the southern railway was now Rhodesia's only lifeline, and the system could be rendered unworkable by congestion without difficulty. Even more distressing, a palpable hostility towards Rhodesia had started to appear in the Afrikaans language press, a fact which strongly suggested that Pretoria was priming her northern neighbour for bad news. Complaints were now frequently heard in South Africa regarding the increasingly heavy political and economic burden of supporting Rhodesia's frankly quite hopeless bid for survival. Rhodesia was still unrecognised and still boycotted almost a decade after the declaration of UDI, and still the focus of unrelenting African and Asian pressure. Moreover, South Africa's own conspicuous social imbalances were attracting growing criticism, and the country needed to concentrate on its own survival, and many in the Republic felt that the moment of separation was near.

For the little that it was worth, Smith's flagging spirits were buoyed a little by a display that beggared Muller's prognostications, proving that the Rhodesian Prime Minister was still held in very high esteem south of the Limpopo. Smith was in the habit of timing his visits to South Africa to coincide with the best of South Africa's international rugby fixtures, and on a visit to Ellis Park Stadium, he was given a standing ovation from over 70,000 fans, a welcome far more enthusiastic than that accorded to Vorster himself.

Another fact that might have lent Smith some comfort in these dark days was that his principal enemy was also squirming under the unwanted interference of his sponsors. As Smith regarded Vorster, so Mugabe had come to view Kaunda. The two had never met, but Mugabe was deeply distrustful of a man so given to compromise, and he disliked him on principle. He would soon meet his nemesis in person, however, and nothing about the meeting would change his mind.

After almost five years of hiatus, the question of Ndabaningi Sithole's leadership of ZANU resurfaced when, having served his term, Sithole was released from confinement and returned to the general prison population. In the yard he found the entire prison establishment in a ferment of both hope and fear over détente, fuelled by rumours that all-party talks were imminent. While most of the rank and file thought excitedly about a possible release, the executive was concerned mainly by the fact that the party could not approach talks with the leadership question unresolved.

Therefore, soon after his release in March 1974, Sithole was summoned before the Central Committee to present his version of the events of 1969. There was nothing he could do to resist these moves other than to not attend any meetings of the council were he would not serve as chairman. In his absence, a resolution condemning him was drafted, and a copy smuggled out of prison.

Sithole was now in a tremendously difficult position. His years in confinement had given him much time to ruminate, and although he could have thrown in the towel, and perhaps should have, he instead opted to tough it out and maintain the constitutionality of his leadership. Refusing to attend meetings might have proved his determination not to be pushed around, but it also left him isolated. A few days later a second meeting was called, and this time he did make an appearance. He came across, however, as haughty and contemptuous, but as he read a rather fumbling vindication of his earlier actions, his hands shook, and his voice was querulous. It was an unconvincing performance, and when the floor was opened, he was denounced to his face. A second resolution was passed that came within a hair of ousting him, but it was agreed instead that he would no longer be permitted to discuss party or national business with any outsider except in the company of another member of the executive.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs lingered for further a month or two, with Sithole keeping mainly to himself and his antagonists doing what they could to isolate him. In due course, he held a routine and private discussion with a Special Branch officer, after which he was immediately questioned by his colleagues. He retorted again that his censure was unconstitutional, and he was under no obligation to explain his actions to anyone. Then, on July 1, most of the Central Committee was transferred to Que Que Prison, and it was there that agitation for his dismissal began in earnest.

The pretext for another round of attacks came again with Sithole's determination to pursue a pragmatic line in the face of what he thought was an unnecessarily uncompromising stance by Mugabe, and because he believed that Mugabe was not the man to interpret the spirit of détente for the people. Sithole made it clear that he thought one-man-one-vote ought not to be an immediate goal, but rather a slogan to be used in mobilisation and negotiation. The chance of a settlement on the basis of one-man-one-vote was so remote that Sithole felt the concept ought not to be the guiding

ideology of the party. Nonetheless, a power struggle simmered until early November, at which point a full meeting of the executive was held, and there Sithole was formally suspended from office. Having orchestrated the dismissal, Mugabe adroitly abstained from the actual vote, claiming that the action was unconstitutional. His concerns were noted, but the action went ahead regardless.

In the meanwhile, events on the outside were also moving rapidly. Later in July, Sithole was visited in Que Que Prison by a member of the Special Branch, Detective Inspector Peter Moores, who informed him that a temporary release had been authorised allowing him to travel to Lusaka for secret talks with Kenneth Kaunda. Mugabe happened to be in the same room writing an examination, and he immediately intruded on the meeting, refusing the invitation on Sithole's behalf on the basis that negotiations were only possible between free men. Whether Sithole liked Mugabe's intervention or not, he was forced to agree. The following day Nkomo, Muzorewa and others of the various councils boarded a South African executive aircraft that flew them to Lusaka, leaving the ZANU leader alone and isolated in his prison cell.

The nationalists travelled in the company of Mark Chona, Kaunda's urbane right-hand man, who also happened to be the younger brother of Mainza Chona, one time Zambian Prime Minister. Mark Chona, who was something of a rising star in the Zambian establishment, was still smarting over an unfortunate and rather crude encounter with Ian Smith. He was charged with the difficult task of liaison between the Frontline leaders and Smith in negotiations to secure the release of the nationalists. Smith was understandably irritated, and dismayed at being forced to authorise the temporary release. He received Chona with a minimum of courtesy, and after a moment or two of terse conversation, he thrust a forefinger into the Zambian's face and promised that if any kind of unity ever came about within the liberation movement, his guest could return to Salisbury and cut the finger off.

Kaunda and Nyerere were no less irritated when the combined contingent of Zimbabwe nationalists arrived in Lusaka without Sithole. There was no point in trying to negotiate unity without the most significant half of the whole. More telephone calls were made, and Peter Moores once again found himself driving out to Que Que prison. Mugabe did not receive the renewed summons well, but the authority of the Frontline leaders

remained absolute and could not be ignored. It was agreed that he would attend the meetings himself, in the company of fellow Central Committee member and Secretary for Youth, Moton Paul Malianga. The two were flown to Salisbury in a Rhodesian Air Force Dakota before being put on a waiting South African aircraft bound for Lusaka.

The following day the two briefly met Nyerere who demanded to know where Ndabaningi Sithole was. The circumstances of the leadership crisis were explained, and as Mugabe had expected, he faced a gale of criticism for staging an unconstitutional coup. Nyerere took the view that if the ZANU executive wished to suspend its leadership, it was its own business, but the move had to be sanctioned by a party congress and endorsed by a democratic vote. On this Machel and Kaunda were both in agreement. Mugabe tried to hold his ground, but as a virtual unknown he was quickly overruled. The meeting was fraught with animosity, and from it, a future of cold relations was born. Mugabe and Malianga were promptly sent back to Rhodesia without even the courtesy of being told the reason for the summons or being allowed to meet Chitepo or any other members of the exiled leadership.

On his return to Que Que, Mugabe called a Central Committee meeting to lay out the terms for Sithole's visit to Lusaka. Sithole's attendance was authorised but on the strict proviso that he was to travel as the party spokesman and not as its leader. To reinforce this point, the hapless Maurice Nyagumbo was detailed to be his chaperone. Nyagumbo's job was to ensure that nothing out of order was said, and that it was clearly understood that Sithole was travelling strictly in his private capacity. The two were then flown to Lusaka where they met a waiting Kenneth Kaunda. Kaunda tried to give no hint of the purpose of the summons, but let enough slip for Nyagumbo to surmise that the object was the establishment of unity between ZANU and ZAPU.

Nyagumbo was not a gifted man, and his fame in the movement came not from his intelligence but his commitment, courage and tenacity. He was also testy and combative at times, and as a result, many of the years he spent in prison were as a consequence of verbal or physical assaults against white officials. Kaunda was known to broadly support Nkomo and ZAPU in the battle of the parties, and Nyagumbo, therefore, took 'unity' to mean 'ZAPU' and accused Kaunda to his face of favouritism and of promoting his 'useless friend' Joshua Nkomo. A noisy and acrimonious

exchange followed, which ended with Sithole pulling the two apart and later severely reprimanding Nyagumbo for lowering even further Kaunda's opinion of ZANU. Kaunda was infuriated and insulted by the episode and would have sent Nyagumbo home via a lengthy spell in a Zambian prison had Sithole and Chitepo not intervened. Against his better judgement, the Zambian President allowed Nyagumbo to accompany Sithole and Chitepo on to Dar es Salaam.

Chitepo spoke for all of the exiled leadership when he lamented the leadership crisis, and Mugabe's 'coup'. Here the seeds of yet more unpleasantness were sown, and although in fairness to Mugabe he had not been alone in fermenting the coup, he had led it and had benefited from it more than anybody else. Needless to say, from that moment on, Herbert Chitepo joined the growing list of men Mugabe did not like. After a long and emotional appeal from the exiles, Nyagumbo agreed to return to Rhodesia to repeal Sithole's suspension until a formal congress could be held.

Nyerere and Kaunda were now finally able to address a complete gathering of the Zimbabwe nationalists. It was time, Nyerere told his audience, for the liberation forces of Zimbabwe to present a common position. An immense amount had been achieved on behalf of the revolution of late, and the Frontline leaders were disinclined to countenance failure only because of divisions within the various liberation councils. This was a sincere and heartfelt plea, and to it, Samora Machel added his own sombre warning. If ZANU did anything to frustrate unity or indeed persisted in trying to marginalise Sithole, he would personally see to it that ZANLA's forward bases in Mozambique were closed down and the several thousand ZANLA men already deployed in his country arrested and detained.

For ZANU, unity was once again not a particularly welcome development. The party was actively engaged in the war and, in the hands of Chitepo and Tongogara, it was being prosecuted with increasing confidence. Exhaustive preparatory work had been undertaken regarding mobilisation, training and politicising the masses, and with the long Mozambican front now opening up, it was to be expected that ZANU would resist peace talks with other movements which had collectively done little or nothing to further the liberation struggle.

This feeling did not seem to impact Sithole, however, who was elated by this renewed exposure. He was now liberated to speak his mind, and this was precisely what he intended to do, whether what he said made sense or not. He enthusiastically endorsed the concept of unity between the liberation movements and toured the forum shaking everybody's hand. The ZANU delegation watched their leader's happy handclapping with utter dismay, and no doubt with a much clearer understanding of recent events. Back in prison, Sithole continued to make the most of his last summer of sunshine. He thoroughly enjoyed chairing a Central Committee meeting that suspended the terms of his suspension and reinstated him as party leader. Then, at the beginning of December, the moment arrived for which he and so many others had been waiting. Under intense pressure from South Africa, and under the terms of détente, most of the jailed nationalists were released.

Smith, in the meanwhile, at last declared himself willing to discuss the question of majority rule, but only if the nationalists would, in turn, agree to honour a ceasefire. This, however, was precisely what Herbert Chitepo feared. He and Josiah Tongogara could sense a movement towards compromise that could only result in a dilution of absolute liberation. While Chitepo was committed to détente because of pressure applied by Nyerere, Kaunda and Machel, this did not stop him grumbling fitfully in the company of James McManus of the UK *Guardian,* who scribbled notes. To his dismay, he was later quoted in that newspaper discussing the question of majority rule.

"[T]hat is not majority rule tomorrow, next week, next year or whenever. It is now."

Smith drew little comfort from the fact that Chitepo was severely rebuked for this outburst, and reminded by Sithole that majority rule was merely a negotiating position. However, while the leadership could chasten Chitepo, the words could not be unspoken.

In the meanwhile, after four days of closed-door horse-trading, the four nationalist parties emerged with an apparently credible unity accord. All four agreed to combine under the umbrella of the now 'United' African National Council, to be led ostensibly by Bishop Muzorewa. A Unity Agreement was signed on 8 December by Sithole for ZANU, Nkomo for ZAPU, James Chikerema for FROLIZI and Muzorewa for the ANC. Ian Smith probably hoped that Mark Chona would fly into Salisbury to cut off

his finger because he then could have asked him who he thought could possibly take Bishop Abel Muzorewa seriously? This alone was a clear indication that the whole agreement was a sham. If it was on Muzorewa's say-so that a ceasefire was to come into effect, then Smith would not be ordering his swords to be beaten into plough shears any time soon.

As if to prove this point, an incident took place that was at once tragic and politically disastrous for Rhodesia. The occupants of a police Land Rover moving cautiously up the Rushinga road were astonished to see a ZANLA detachment walking openly towards them. A wary white patrol officer responded to being flagged down, after which a curious exchange followed between him and the guerrilla leader. The detachment commander, who introduced himself as Herbert Shungu, added that he was interested in learning more about the ceasefire. Shungu was duly loaded into the Land Rover and driven to an interview with the local commanding officer of Special Branch. A wide-ranging and cordial discussion was recorded which ended with Shungu agreeing to return to the bush to bring in his detachment.

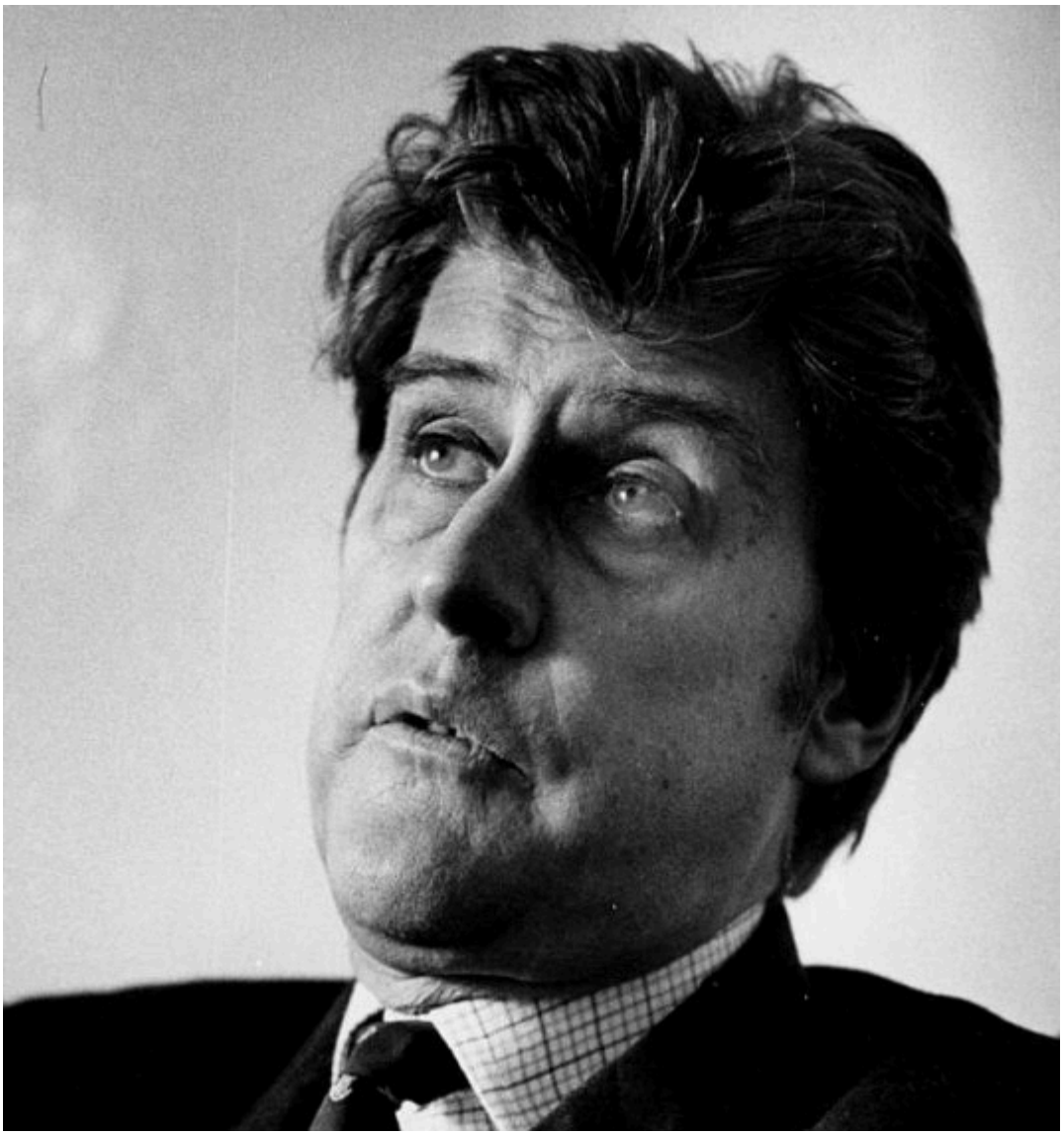
Shungu, however, did not return, and nothing more was heard of him until late December when he waved down a South African Police patrol on the Mazoe low-level bridge. Aware of his earlier approaches, the SAP men were reasonably friendly and responded in due course to his assurances that they could safely lower their weapons. The moment that they did, however, the ZANLA detachment opened fire, killing five members in cold blood. The only survivor was a black BSAP constable who saved his own life by leaping into the swollen waters of the Mazoe River. Shungu then spent an entertaining few days taunting Security Forces in the Rushinga District over a captured radio until the batteries ran out.

Despite the loss of life, the incident came as something of a timely relief to Pretoria. Central to Détente was the withdrawal of South African manpower from Rhodesia, which had until then been a problematic order for Pretoria to give. Force levels had been reduced considerably over the preceding months, but a complete withdrawal would have offended the fraternal doctrine that continued to exist between South African and Rhodesian whites. The Herbert Shungu affair brought the matter to a head and, in the wake of it, Smith was summoned to Cape Town to be briefed on 'new developments'.

In an atmosphere of foreboding, a Rhodesian delegation flew out of Salisbury on the morning of 16 February 1975. Prime Minister John Vorster received them at Groote Schuur and ushered them into a side room where they were confronted by a coterie of cabinet ministers. There was, of course, the usual preamble, tea and trivialities until eventually the tension was broken by the news that everyone had been expecting. South Africa intended to pull all of her armed units out of Rhodesia with more or less immediate effect. Smith was told that South African personnel were increasingly feeling that they were fighting for a cause they did not support. It was generally felt that Rhodesia had fallen 'out of step with South African policy!'

This comment probably had much to do with the fact that Vorster had been receiving petitions from his supporters questioning why young South Africans were dying for a system that was already allowing black participation. This, taken to its logical conclusion, meant that Rhodesia had already defined its future under the principle of majority rule, so why waste South African lives?

Smith smiled bitterly, for these people after all were supposed to be his friends. What if Bantustans were immediately created in Rhodesia, he asked, what if institutionalised apartheid was forced on Rhodesian blacks? Would the South African forces then feel more comfortable? Vorster was not amused. It was precisely this sort of thing that he hated about Smith. As Winston Churchill had once quipped of Labour Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps: "…he has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire". After the meetings, Smith and his delegation were invited to a luncheon at Groote Schuur, but each member discovered that he had lost his appetite.



P.K. van de Byl

11
The Nhari Rebellion

Tactics teach the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of the war – **Carl von Clausewitz**

The political detainees were released more or less as a result of South African pressure and, as a consequence, they walked the streets without the blessing of the Rhodesian Government. Watching over their every movement, however, was Special Branch looking for any excuse to lock them up again. Some of the nationalists left the country and others dropped out of the struggle, but a few remained in the public eye to achieve what they could before the next axe fell.

While Joshua Nkomo launched himself into an energetic reorganisation of ZAPU, Sithole remained powerless to direct or contain Robert Mugabe, who also threw himself into a general reorganisation. Mugabe knew that more than anyone he risked jail by political organising, and with a party leader like Sithole, that risk was greatly amplified. His primary objective was to recruit as many young people as possible to build up ZANLA's fighting forces in Mozambique. This was hazardous work, for if he put one foot wrong, he might well disappear permanently. He knew that he had to move fast and then time the moment correctly to get safely out of the country.

After a decade of neglect, the internal structures of ZANU were moribund, although in Lusaka the party was well led and well organised by Chitepo and Tongogara. These two appeared to at least have the existing military structure well in hand, and while they were around, there was little that Mugabe could achieve in Lusaka. Mozambique, however, fast gaining significance as an extensive new front against Rhodesia, remained to be exploited in its entirety and, with this in mind, Mugabe set to work.

At that time Mugabe benefited from the fact that he was held in relatively low esteem by the Frontline leaders. This gave him the opportunity to work toward his own ends without interference. Chitepo, Sithole and all the others were, by then, the protégé of one or other of the Frontline leaders, and had little scope in that position for independent action. They were also powerless to explain the enormous confusion that

Détente was creating throughout the party, and in particular among the fighting men now in hiatus on the front line.

Most ZANLA operational groups were not equipped with any means of radio or telephone communication, so information from Lusaka reached them by carrier, word of mouth or rumour. Détente was a subject of regular campfire discussion, and with the ceasefire on or off or on again, no one really knew for sure what was going on. High-level negotiations between fat cats in plush capitals seemed very far away, and when the supply of war materiel ebbed to a trickle, speculation on the frontline became negative and then angry. Arms supplies had, in fact, dwindled primarily because of an expectation in Lusaka and Dar-es-Salaam that peace negotiations were imminent. The fighters, however, were never directly informed of this and, consequently, disaffection spread rapidly through the ranks.

Ironically, the best information reaching the fighters in the northeast and in Tete Province tended to be that originating from Special Branch. To the Rhodesian Security forces, who were suffering none of the disadvantages of poor resupply, leadership and communications, Détente and the ceasefire meant simply boredom and inactivity. To Special Branch personnel, however, with time to spare in their forward positions, the situation offered a unique opportunity to try and advance matters with a little judicious trickery and disinformation.

As the Portuguese steadily abandoned their garrisons throughout Tete Province, Special Branch began establishing friendly contacts with incoming FRELIMO units. Initially, the Rhodesians found FRELIMO receptive, and in due course, a reciprocating cross-border accord came into effect. FRELIMO soldiers took to regularly crossing into Rhodesia to buy food and liquor, while Special Branch was allowed to move reasonably freely in Mozambique, learning what they could about ZANLA movements.

In September, and again in November of 1974, Special Branch made contact with various ZANLA sectorial commanders operating out of Tete, and from someone called Raphael Chinyanganya, or Thomas Nhari as he was known in the field, they learned a great deal. Nhari was a competent commander and a committed ideologue, and as such his rise through the ranks of the armed forces had been rapid. He had been active on the front line since the Altena attacks, and he and a certain Dakari Badza were the current commanders respectively of the Nehanda and Chaminuka Sectors of the northeast. It was from these two that Special Branch received its first

confirmation of the ZANU leadership crisis in Sikombela, Salisbury and Que Que prisons. After several conversations, Special Branch urged the two men to align themselves to the Sithole faction.

It also came to light that a power struggle had broken out in Lusaka between Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara. This was separate but parallel to the usual friction between the nationalist parties that the CIO, with its Lusaka-based operatives, took great pleasure in aggravating. This intelligence presented an opportunity for Special Branch to infect the wound with a picture of a leadership that had sold out. Stories were spread of fat cats junketing from one end of the world to the other while the fighting men of the revolution died neglected in the bush. The fact that Herbert Chitepo's official vehicle was a Volkswagen Beetle of uncertain vintage, and that Mugabe was applying the full force of his character to the job of rebuilding the structure of the struggle hardly alludes to champagne lifestyles, but that was beside the point. This propaganda assault was very effective, indeed, more effective in fact than the Special Branch men operating on the border with Mozambique could have dared imagine.

Thomas Nhari was an ex-schoolteacher who at one time aspired to study law but was educated only briefly before the money ran out. He was then unable to secure sponsorship, so he drifted into teaching. In 1967 he was smuggled out of Rhodesia by ZAPU, narrowly forestalling his arrest for crimes against law and order. Sojourning briefly in Lusaka, he soon joined ZANLA and shipped out for training in Moscow. After returning to the struggle, he felt that his natural place was not on the front line, but in the high command. This frustrated ambition and resentment played neatly into the hands of Special Branch, and he became prime material for manipulation. His anger was adroitly harnessed, and before very long he was observed to be contemplating a coup.

Nhari's bitterness and personal frustration was also widely reflected in the rank and file, and none of it was entirely unjustified. The political leadership of ZANU had always exhibited a shocking indifference to the welfare of the fighting men, and it was not difficult, therefore, for Nhari to raise a small force willing to march on Lusaka to mete out a little salutary justice. As Special Branch stoked the fire, events gathered momentum very quickly, and soon enough, the Rhodesians were able to retreat back across the border to observe as a bloody rebellion unfolded.

Nhari's initial objective was to take over the main rear base of Chifombo, situated in northern Tete Province not far from the Zambian border. Initially, it seems that Nhari, along with his protégé Badza, set off alone because the angry men were not yet quite angry enough. The two were caught, however, and after receiving fifteen lashes each, and Badza losing his command, they were returned to the frontline. By November 1974, however, when the 'unity' talks were due to begin in Lusaka, they were ready to try again. This time they marched north at the head of a body of thirty armed men. There was, however, a great deal of confusion and acrimony during the seven-day march, and some shootings and other abuses directed at waning supporters. Nonetheless, the group was able to take over the Chifombo base by force of arms, while two commanders who attempted to oppose the rebellion were buried alive by their comrades just outside the perimeter.

Nhari then appointed a nine-man military high command, headed by himself as Josiah Tongogara's replacement. His first decision was that all members of the High Command in Lusaka, including Tongogara himself, were to be apprehended and brought to the front line to serve as ordinary cadre. At the time, Josiah Tongogara happened to be visiting Romania in the company of Herbert Chitepo, and news of the coup only reached him on his return in early December. Once back in Lusaka he took the information directly to Ndabaningi Sithole, who he found depressed and rather indifferent. Sithole urged Tongogara to keep the news to himself in case the story broke and interfered with the unity talks then underway. When asked what should be done, Sithole shrugged and remarked that "if there had been a coup then there had been a coup". If Tongogara had been ousted, then the party would sponsor his education abroad. Sithole had probably lost interest in military matters by then in any case, due, no doubt, to his belief that a settlement was imminent.

Suspecting Herbert Chitepo to be one of the 'big fish' behind the rebellion, Tongogara avoided seeking any advice or leadership from him and instead set about coping with the crisis himself. From a personal point of view it was the first direct challenge to the authority of the High Command, and in particular to his own control over the military. It also presented a potential opportunity for him to emerge as the overall leader of ZANU. Mugabe was in Salisbury, and not at that point considered to be in contention, while Chitepo had been wrong-footed by Sithole's release and

was now searching for a plot behind every bush. Sithole was the anointed one, but he was mostly powerless to influence events, so for the moment, the mantle had fallen on Tongogara to rescue the party and the struggle from a descent into total anarchy.

In the meanwhile, the rebels arrived in Lusaka in two trucks, heavily armed, drunk, belligerent and broke. They demanded money from Tongogara who refused, but he agreed to meet the group at a bar just outside Lusaka, where a large number were already drinking heavily on Kalashnikov credit. The meeting then moved on to a house in the suburb of New Kabwata, where Tongogara was read a document listing the grievances of the rebels. He was menaced to accept a change of leadership and promised that if he did not do so, he would receive a 'surprise' within twelve hours.

Kenneth Kaunda was probably more surprised than anyone when news of all this reached him. He was also furious, as he often seemed to be in those days. Both guerrilla armies were tolerated in Zambia only on the strict proviso that they did not carry arms, the logic being simply that the Zimbabwe nationalists were now wielding more firepower than his army, and he could not afford a civil war. Back in New Kabwata, in the meanwhile, Tongogara was holding his ground. He reminded the rebels that he was their commander, and ordered them to put down their weapons. Nhari then attempted a compromise, offering Tongogara the position of coordinating secretary in a new command. This was refused, and Tongogara sent the rebels off with orders for them to sober up and return to the ZANU offices the following morning when he might be willing to listen to them.

Tongogara's 'surprise', in the meanwhile, was delivered the following evening. When he arrived home from a reception in the company of Rex Nhongo, the pair were ambushed by Nhari, Badza and an attack group of about eight rebels. Tongogara and Nhongo escaped under a hail of gunfire by taking to their heels in different directions. When a police detail arrived to investigate, the rebels fled. Tongogara entered his gutted home to find his wife and child missing. Later the rebels returned to the scene in one of their trucks, but immediately ran into a reinforced police detail, and after a brief firefight Nhari and his companions were disarmed and arrested. The following day Nhari led Tongogara and the Zambian police to where Tongogara's family were being held. Two of his older boys had been tied to a tree while his wife had been stripped to her underwear and tortured.

It is notable that Nhari and his followers had made no hostile advances against Herbert Chitepo. While on a visit to Malawi, Chitepo was briefly detained by the head of ZANLA's internal security, apparently on the orders of Tongogara, but was released a short while later as no fault could be found. However, the incident betrayed more than a little of the growing tension within the party.

In the meanwhile, Tongogara's response to the attack was rapid and decisive. The rebels at Chifombo were disarmed by FRELIMO, and Tongogara entered the camp on Christmas day at the head of a force of newly trained cadre. Badza, Nhari and another rebel named Mathew Nyanga were executed on the spot. By this time most of Nhari's force had deserted or returned to the party, pleading that they had been coerced by threats. Many were dealt with in brutal purges that claimed the lives of upwards of 150 guerrillas and party officials. Tongogara took no personal responsibility for the deaths, remarking casually that these were men who had "died at the hands of the party".

The violence that erupted in the aftermath of all this was out of all proportion to the size of the rebellion. No one, least of all Nhari, Tongogara or Chitepo quite realised the extent to which tensions had been building within the party. Increased Rhodesian military successes, the short-term success of the Protected Village programme and an unregulated flood of poorly trained recruits from Zambia all added to this. However, the politics of revolution was only part of the reason for the subsequent slaughter. Factionalism, tribalism, suspicion and violence always seemed to flower when two or more nationalists gathered for a political purpose. No two accounts of the Nhari Rebellion have drawn the same conclusion and, since most of the actors were either killed or silenced, much of what actually happened, and why, remains speculative. What is clear, however, is that the rebellion triggered a catastrophic bout of violence and murder in Lusaka that dismayed the Zambians and the Frontline leaders who were all initially powerless to intervene.

With the ink barely dry on what was hailed as the ultimate unity agreement, this was a manifestly ridiculous situation. In Lusaka, the factions of ZANU were literally tearing out each other's throats. Special Branch and the Rhodesian Government were naturally delighted, and Smith remained attached to his finger, although he doubtless would willingly have sacrificed a digit or two just to see the look on Mark Chona's face. On 13

March, Kaunda summoned Herbert Chitepo to his offices and demanded that he end the derangement. Chitepo had just returned from his brief imprisonment and admitted to Kaunda that there was nothing that he could do. He was stained with complicity in the Nhari Rebellion and, against this, his minority tribal background offered no protection at all. By then, he admitted, even he had reasonable grounds to fear for his life.

How ironic this comment would prove to be, for just five days later, at a few minutes after 08h00, the morning calm of the Chilenje South suburb of Lusaka was shattered by a massive car bomb explosion. The blast destroyed Chitepo's VW Beetle, killing him and a bodyguard outright. A flying wheel also killed the child of a next-door neighbour. For Kenneth Kaunda, usually a tolerant and mild-natured man, this was the last straw. The Zambian police launched a programme of arrests and detention, and one or two extrajudicial killings of their own, to which the Rhodesian CIO busily added what disinformation it could.

The day after Herbert Chitepo's burial, a mass arrest of ZANU members began. Seventy high-ranking ZANU and ZANLA officials were taken into custody, and ZANU's Lusaka offices were closed down. All ZANLA military bases in the country were ordered evacuated. Just in time, Josiah Tongogara and several of his high-ranking commanders slipped quietly across the border into Mozambique. Kaunda then announced that an international committee of enquiry was to be appointed to get to the bottom of the matter. Closest to his heart in this regard were whispers that somehow he had been behind Chitepo's murder. He was known to dislike the man, and indeed, he vocally championed ZAPU in favour of ZANU. However, whatever the commission turned up, one thing was for sure, it would not blame Kenneth Kaunda.

Samora Machel, on the other hand, was fond of Chitepo and was irritated by the accepted wisdom that Tongogara was behind his murder. When he heard that the OAU had endorsed the proposed commission, he ordered that Tongogara and three other members of his high command return to Lusaka to assist it. On their arrival all four were promptly arrested. African interrogation methods can usually be relied on to be simple and to the point, and Tongogara was reported to have been tortured to the extent that his back was broken. Sadat Kufamazuba, one of Chitepo's two bodyguards, and the only survivor of the explosion was taken into custody and severely beaten despite grievous injuries sustained in the blast. Others

were beaten routinely, starved and sleep-deprived. Kaunda was a peaceful man by his own reckoning, but the whole thing had gone just too far. A little bit of rough stuff was a small price to pay to restore order in his capital and to provide sufficient grounds to kick ZANU finally out of the country.

The Commission began its work in July 1975, and on 8 March 1976, ten days before the first anniversary of Chitepo's murder, its report was presented to Kenneth Kaunda. The findings pointed the finger squarely at members of the ZANU *Dare Chimurenga* and the ZANLA High Command. Josiah Tongogara was explicitly named, along with four other people. The underlying logic was presumably that Tongogara ordered the hit to better align himself for the ultimate leadership of a free Zimbabwe.

Now, of course, the entire command and control structure of ZANU was in disarray, as well as being homeless. Ultimately more than 1,300 ZANLA combatants were detained in Zambian prisons, and as a consequence, ZANU's war against Rhodesia virtually ground to a halt. Robert Mugabe responded by issuing a statement blaming the Zambian Government for complicity in Chitepo's murder, and announcing an end to the participation of his faction of ZANU in Détente, or any future negotiation with Ian Smith.

Chitepo's assassination certainly stirred up a hornet's nest. Mugabe blamed the Zambians, and the Zambians accused ZANU, but in private there were strong suspicions that somehow the Rhodesians were behind it all. It is in the nature of covert operations that the truth is always obscure, but Ken Flower, who ought to have known, claimed in his memoir that the CIO had set up the assassination. Liberation historians David Martin and Phyllis Johnson produced a book in the same year that purported to finally put the matter to rest, but it did no such thing. Martin and Johnson's book, however, was closely followed by another, written by respected Rhodesian war historian Peter Stiff, entitled 'See You In November'. 'See You In November' records the operations of an alumnus of the British SAS with the *nom de guerre* of 'Taffy'. Following Ken Flower's admission that he knew the circumstances of Chitepo's death, Taffy revealed that he was the CIO-sponsored assassin of the ZANU leader. Taffy was, in fact, Alan 'Taffy' Brice, whose identity was held secret by all concerned until his death in 2006. Brice had been working for the CIO in Zambia for years, and using homemade, and often unstable devices, he had been regularly vandalising targets in the capital, making it appear that ZANU and ZAPU

were engaged in ongoing tit-for-tat attacks. He was never exposed by the Zambians, and in a short but fruitful career was responsible for considerable mayhem.

It is the opinion of this author that the revelations made by Peter Stiff in his book 'See You In November' present the most plausible theory regarding Chitepo's assassination, although, to date, the jury remains out. The matter, in the end, became so highly politicised that a simple covert operation by a competent enemy did not, and continued not to satisfy political historians who were, or are biased in one direction or another. The matter, therefore, remains a subject of fierce debate.

One man who was definitely not grieving Herbert Chitepo's death was Robert Mugabe. Because Kenneth Kaunda was finally washing his hands of ZANU, Mugabe found the way open to pursuing his own objectives more fruitfully. With Chitepo dead, Sithole discredited and Tongogara in a Zambian prison, Mugabe was at last beginning to sense that his star was rising.

As all of this was taking place, Robert Mugabe was still very active in Rhodesia, but also aware that it was only a matter of time before he would be rearrested. With the suddenly altered dynamics of the struggle, he had now to think very carefully about his future. Zambia was out of bounds, not only because of Kaunda's banning of ZANU but also because Mugabe wanted no part of Détente. It was a policy designed to appeal to the moderates, and in his estimation, it would not, and could not succeed for that very reason. Of all the Frontline leaders, Mugabe identified Machel as his only kindred spirit, although that admiration was yet to be reciprocated.

Machel was a militant, a Marxist and an advocate of the total solution. Mozambique was not handed over to majority rule, it was handed over to FRELIMO. The new military was not known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Mozambique, or any other such nomenclature, but only as FRELIMO. FRELIMO was as ubiquitous and all-powerful as the Russian Communist Party, and Machel was its Vladimir Lenin, and it was this more than anything else that excited Robert Mugabe's most humble ambitions. With the battlefront now extending from Mukumbura to Vila Salazar, he could clearly picture the next phase of the conflict. Virtually uninhibited access to Rhodesia would give any force incumbent in Mozambique the edge to win the war. Mugabe, therefore, made up his mind that when things

became too warm for him in Rhodesia, it would be to Mozambique that he would flee.

When Ndabaningi Sithole and Maurice Nyagumbo were rearrested in March for their own recruitment drives, and also on the improbable charge of plotting to kill their comrades, Mugabe judged that the moment had arrived for him to make his escape. As Special Branch trawled the townships looking for him, he put the finishing touches to his plan. Early in April, he and a loyal associate, Edgar Tekere, slipped out of Salisbury and were driven to Inyanga by a Catholic Sister by the name of Mary Aquina. In Inyanga they were sheltered by an elderly, but thoroughly revolutionary Manyika Chief by the name of Rekayi Tangwena. After a week or so lying low, Tangwena guided the small party on foot past Security Force patrols and ambushes into Mozambique.

There news reached Mugabe that, after a terse bout of shuttle diplomacy, the South Africans had once again secured Sithole's unconditional release. Mugabe had not anticipated this, and the news put an immediate brake on his plans. Sithole was evidently still recognised as party leader, and as such, was expected to attend the 1975 OAU Foreign Ministers Conference to be held in Dar-es-Salaam later that month. With him, he took the primary focus of ZANU, and since he still enjoyed the recognition of Machel and other key members of the OAU, a wrong-footed Mugabe was aggrieved to find himself alone in hostile territory, with absolutely no claim to diplomatic protection.

When Machel heard that Mugabe was an uninvited guest in his country, he was less than delighted, and immediately ordered that the fugitive be placed under 'protective custody' until some sort of assessment of the situation could be made. The most pedigreed revolutionary in southern Africa still suspected Mugabe, and still more or less supported Sithole, but was shrewd enough to appreciate that there was rarely smoke without fire. Before any permanent decisions were made about Mugabe's future, therefore, Machel intended to wait and see who emerged from the power struggle the stronger man. In the meanwhile, Mugabe was interned in the pleasant but isolated surroundings of a villa in the small port settlement of Quelimane.

Mugabe, however, made diligent use of his time by familiarising himself with the various ZANLA placements scattered around the country. Moving around as covertly as he was able, he presented his credentials to

the local commanders and fighters, while at the same time assessed for himself how the army worked and its general state of battle readiness. Although never a particular friend of the masses, he made a point of taking an interest in the mechanics of war in exchange for the chance to dispense a little political re-education. Netting droves of new recruits and refugees who were flooding east, he turned many impromptu meetings into political rallies, and in due course more and more people began to look to him for guns, training and leadership. Within six months of leaving Rhodesia, he successfully organised upwards of 10,000 Zimbabweans residing for one reason or another in Mozambique. With his genius for organisation, he created the bedrock of a movement that would endure for the duration of the war, and beyond.

Herbert Chitepo

12
Farce at the Falls

The policy of separate development can be tested by any unprejudiced person against the requirements of Christianity and morality, and it will be found to meet all those requirements. ... for conditions such as those in South Africa, there is no other policy – **John Vorster**

As Mugabe was preparing for total war, others in the movement were treading obediently towards the concluding act of Détente. Preparations were underway for the much-anticipated constitutional conference that was intended to be the crowning achievement of Vorster's policy of rapprochement. By then unity was acknowledged as a sham, and Abel Muzorewa, a sham unity leader. The presidency of a free Zimbabwe was now an open race, and at that point, each man had as much chance as the next of claiming the laurel wreath.

The choice of venue for the conference was a railway coach parked precisely on the border between Zambia and Rhodesia, midway across the picturesque railway bridge spanning the Zambezi Gorge. The choice symbolised the fact that neither side was prepared to give an inch. Bishop Muzorewa was to lead a large delegation of nationalists under the guidance of Kaunda, while Smith, with everything to lose and nothing to gain, wearily mustered his forces and agreed to the arrangement on the say-so of John Vorster.

For Smith, the moment was a bitter one. Both his own instincts and his military commanders were warning him that compromise was incompatible with the facts on the ground. The nationalists were in disarray and now was the optimum moment to flood Mozambique with fire and crush the armed struggle finally and conclusively. When that had been done, the dialogue could then be pursued from a position of strength. However, Smith could not give that order, for had he done so, his Security Forces would have had to win the war with just the bullets in their rifles. Supplies from the south would have ceased immediately, and Rhodesia would effectively be sealed up as tight as a drum. Smith had no choice but to tether his dogs and trudge north to indulge in yet more wasteful and irrelevant dialogue.

The conference was held on 25 August 1975 and was as much a pretext for Vorster to meet Kaunda face-to-face as it was an opportunity for Rhodesia to align itself with prevailing world opinion. When the Rhodesians arrived, it was clear from the number of international journalists filling local hotels that the event was to be a South African media circus. The parties were to meet in a luxurious South African Railways salon with an equally plush dining car coupled to either end. One was for the Rhodesians and the other for the nationalists, and each was stocked to the roof with the best delicacies, wines and liquor that South Africa could provide.

On the morning of the conference, Vorster flew up from Pretoria in the company of his Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller. It had been planned that he and Kenneth Kaunda would open the meeting with their mutual blessings, and after the preliminary speeches, they would retire and not interfere in any way. Smith was briefed by Vorster that the object of the conference was merely for each side to appoint representatives who would meet in Salisbury at a later date, were negotiating a new constitution would actually take place. In this way, appearances would be maintained, and everyone would walk away happy.

When the Rhodesian delegation of six ministers arrived, they were confronted by an assortment of forty or more nationalists. Everyone except Mugabe was there, and everyone was trying to get the best seat. Vorster, who was not a small man, also squeezed himself in, followed by Kaunda, who grinned, sweated and nodded as the South African Prime Minister wished them all Godspeed. The two then retreated to another carriage to assess one another and await results from the salon.

Bishop Abel Muzorewa opened the conference and, at complete variance with his usually timid nature, he began to thump the table. He stated clearly and forcefully that one-man-one-vote was to be the fundamental prerequisite for any agreement, which had most definitely not been part of the brief. It is easy to picture Smith raising his eyebrows and exchanging a glance or two with his colleagues. He might have peeked at his watch, drummed his fingers on his blotter or gazed through a window at the magnificent falls. In all probability, thoughts of a racial nature slipped through his mind. All the other demands – a general amnesty, freedom of campaigning etcetera – hardly seemed worth listening to. For the Rhodesians, the conference was as good as over. It was all just a contest of

relevance among the competing nationalists themselves, and it had nothing to do with him.

While Smith was bored to distraction, the meeting between Vorster and Kaunda went well. They soon moved out of the overcrowded and overheated carriage and made their way to the Mosi-o-Tunya Hotel in Livingstone, where a crowd of cheering locals lined the route waving placards applauding Vorster and his revolutionary leadership. After tea with various Zambian dignitaries, Vorster thumbed his nose at the Rhodesians by driving Kaunda across the bridge into Rhodesia, where less formal talks were held. Kaunda was known to be fond of an occasional Manhattan, and the veranda of the Victoria Falls Hotel was a perfect place to partake. Later he reciprocated by inviting Vorster to be guest of honour at a luncheon in Livingstone.

At noon Smith also proposed an adjournment for lunch, which prompted a dash for the dining salon on the Zambian side. The Rhodesians then wandered off to complain to Vorster, but by that time the South African could hardly have cared. The press had left the scene, he had thoroughly broken the ice with Kaunda and, in fact, would soon be on a flight back to Pretoria. The nationalists settled in to make merry in their dining salon while on the opposite bank the Rhodesians contented themselves with a reflective beer or two on the same veranda of the Victoria Falls Hotel.

Later that afternoon Smith revisited the conference venue to see what chances there were of resumption, but there were none. He found the nationalist salon in a shambles with no sign of the delegation. Smith had little time for alcohol and even less for its effects, so he noted with resigned distaste that the free South African liquor had been obliterated. Shaking his head he looked down at the Zambezi River, swirling several hundred feet below, and to the majestic Victoria Falls. The bridge upon which he stood, and the railway line it supported, were all the work of that man so honoured by the name of his country, and he must surely have wondered were all of this was going.

13
The Disappearance of a Nationalist and the Mgagao Declaration

What some of us are fighting for is to see that this oppressive system is crushed. We don't care whether, I don't even care whether I will be part of the top echelon in the ruling, I'm not worried, but I'm dying to see a change in the system, that's all, that's all – **Josiah Tongogara**

The collapse of the Victoria Falls conference had the dual effect of freeing up the Rhodesian Army to get back to the business of war and softening Ian Smith's attitude to Joshua Nkomo, whom he had begun to view as a possible ally. If he was going to be in negotiation with somebody, then Nkomo was probably the best of a bad lot. Muzorewa would naturally have been the better choice, but for the time being, he seemed mesmerised by fairy-tale ambitions. To get through to Nkomo, and set the stage for some sort of contact, Smith used the reliable and ever resourceful Ken Flower to act as his front man in Lusaka.

Among the first to notice this sudden change of direction was the UANC's publicity secretary, Edson Sithole (no relation to Ndabaningi Sithole), whose earlier criticism of Muzorewa's willingness to reach an agreement with Smith had seen him arbitrarily detained. He was also now apt to proclaim loudly his conviction that the Smith regime had ordered the murder of Herbert Chitepo. At Chitepo's burial, he delivered a speech stating that this killing finally scuttled any possibility of a negotiated settlement. In the same tone he now loudly decried contacts between Nkomo and Smith, which inevitably marked him in both camps as a problem.

Edson Sithole was another of that post-war generation who by grit and determination educated himself, and then rose through the ranks of the liberation movement by competence and commitment. He was a short, spry and energetic character, who bore more than a passing resemblance to Doctor Leander Starr Jameson. As a consequence of being detained in Whitehead's roundups in February 1959, Sithole missed the opportunity to study abroad. While in detention, however, he studied for an LLB through the University of London, and in 1963 sat and passed the Rhodesian Bar examination. Politically he was a radical, holding early office in the Youth

League, the UANC and ZANU before joining Muzorewa's centrist African National Council. He was deeply distrustful of Joshua Nkomo and vigilant against any effort by ZAPU to use the UANC for its own ends.

And, of course, his suspicions were not entirely without basis. Now that he was free, Nkomo, as the leader of ZAPU, did not appreciate the necessity of acknowledging Bishop Abel Muzorewa as leader of the United African National Council. His inclination, therefore, was to provoke a crisis of some sort, after which he would demand a congress, and there manoeuvre his substantial person into the seat of the chairman, where it belonged. Muzorewa, on an ecumenical tour of the United States, was not long in hearing whispers of this, and he hurried home. On his return, in September 1975, he called for a meeting at which Nkomo was expelled from the UANC, along with one or two others who were loyal to him. No matter what one might have thought of Muzorewa, he stepped into the ring swinging, and Nkomo, for a moment or two, was quite taken aback. However, Nkomo promptly formed his own ANC, calling it ANC-Z, and before long the two men were trading threats, and the worst of Edson Sithole's fears were realised. The Rhodesians, of course, watched it all unfold with interest, and were generally very happy with the result.

The ANC-Z was in every respect the rebirth of ZAPU and, for the time being, the Rhodesians were content to let it exist. This was not only because of their renewed contacts with Nkomo but also because the entire party structure was riddled with police informers. Nothing Nkomo did, thought or planned was a mystery to Special Branch for very long. On 1 December 1975, he and Smith went so far as to sign a 'Declaration of Intent to Negotiate a Settlement', an accord that lived on in precarious health for a year or so, until it was undone by events. In the meantime, one of the least creditable episodes of the war as far as the Rhodesian Government was concerned took place.

Edson Sithole was a regular visitor to the Quill Club in the Ambassador Hotel in Salisbury, a popular, multiracial bar and watering hole in Salisbury. At about seven o'clock on the evening of 15 October 1975, Sithole arrived outside the Ambassador Hotel in his BMW, with his secretary and girlfriend Miriam Mhlanga. As the two stepped out of the car, they were approached by a pair of white individuals who identified themselves as members of the Special Branch. Such approaches were commonplace for Sithole, so at first, he was not unduly concerned. He and

Miss Mhlanga followed the men to a VW Kombi parked against the curb. They were then seized and bundled inside, upon which the vehicle sped away.

It so happened that the Secretary-General of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace witnessed the incident, also seeing a black man climb into Sithole's car and drive it away. The vehicle was later found abandoned outside Umtali, perhaps to give the impression that its owner had fled into Mozambique. Neither Edson Sithole nor Miriam Mhlanga was ever seen again.

The CCJP promptly hired a private investigator to look into the disappearance and, before long, a black army corporal was identified who signed a sworn statement to the effect that he saw Sithole at the main Selous Scouts Inkomo Barracks a short time after the abduction. Henrik Ellert, author of the authoritative 'Rhodesian Front War', presents the theory that the Selous Scouts conspired to abduct and 'turn' Sithole, and that it was just unfortunate that it was witnessed because then it became necessary to kill him. The witness who saw Sithole at Inkomo Barracks was sent to Malawi for his own safety but was returned as a favour to the Selous Scouts by Malawi Special Branch. He also was never seen again.

In the meanwhile, all things considered, both Mugabe and Smith were ready to settle matters. Conditions were optimal for war, both sides wanted it, and so it promised to be quite a fight. For the Rhodesians, this was a matter of merely issuing orders, but for the guerrilla factions, it was much more complicated. All of the kinetics associated with establishing unity had, in the end, achieved nothing, and nothing changed. For the Nkomo faction, it meant Nkomo, but for the Mugabe faction, it meant no such thing. Mugabe still had no legitimate claim to the leadership of the struggle, and so he remained hamstrung.

As all of this was taking place, of course, ZANLA, the military wing of ZANU, was a force without a leader. While Tongogara remained in prison in Zambia, Sithole seemed to be sinking under the weight of a nervous breakdown. In October 1975, forty-three ZANLA commanders met at Mgagao Camp in southern Tanzania where a series of closed meetings were held to plan a way forward. The party and the revolution stood at a crossroads. While the overall leadership picture was very bleak, the unknown quantity was Mugabe.

These meetings continued over several days, but in the end, the ZANLA high command came down on Mugabe's side and declared their loyalty to him. The written version of these findings, the 'Mgagao Declaration', is as seminal to Zimbabwean liberation doctrine as UDI was to Rhodesia. Ndabaningi Sithole was fired, the others told to pull their socks up, and the job handed to Mugabe. No congress was necessary. An appeal was then submitted to the leaders of the frontline states to bow to the inevitable, accept the situation as it was and grant ZANLA the opportunity to go back to war. This was the signal that Samora Machel had been waiting for, and Mugabe's conditions of house arrest were soon afterwards withdrawn.

After a certain amount of shuffling and reorganisation, ZIPRA and ZANLA, who had briefly united under the limp flag of ZIPA, or the 'Zimbabwe People's Army', separated and went their own ways. ZANLA's future base of operations would be Mozambique while ZIPRA would remain mainly operational in Zambia, with some bases later established in Botswana. Some complaints were heard that ZIPRA was determined to commit as few resources as possible to this new phase of the struggle, preferring to build its conventional capability for some future point when it would advance to claim territory in Rhodesia.

This was perhaps a sign of things to come, but for the time being it was understood that each army would fight its own war, and ZANLA again found itself at the bottom of the list for the distribution of Soviet military support. Like Smith, Mugabe had learned in years past that friends can sometimes be more of an encumbrance than enemies, but Mugabe, at least, had more options. He established independent relations with Red China, Romania and Yugoslavia, sourcing arms, money and training. In due course four of the Frontline leaders paid him a visit in Quelimane, and formally conceded that détente had failed. All now agreed that there was no alternative to total war.

Almost from that moment, guerrilla incursions began to spread rapidly throughout the previously insulated eastern provinces of Rhodesia. The soft underbelly of the nation was suddenly exposed as a new, 600-miles front opened. From north to south, ZANLA's operational divisions were the 'Takawira Sector', 'Chitepo Sector', 'Tangwena Sector', 'Monomatapa Sector' and 'Musikavanhu Sector'. Below these, adjacent to the Gonarezou National Park, three further sectors were numbered and not named, in order

not to impose chiShona names on tribally divergent areas. The Rhodesian Security Forces covered the same essential area with two operational command centres, codenamed Operations *Thrasher* and *Repulse*.

In simple terms, ZANLA deployments were arranged so that Tanzanian-trained guerrillas, earmarked for deployment in Manicaland, were shipped south from Dar-es-Salaam to Beira, and from there driven to a large rear base on the Nyadzonia River not far from the provincial Mozambican capital of Chimoio. Those intended for deployment in the Tangwena and Monomatapa Sectors were trucked north, while those heading east into Musikavanhu Sector tended to infiltrate on foot.

This was a very different scope and pace of organisation than anything in the past, and hostile activities were not long in being felt on the frontline. On 2 February 1976, an 11-ton truck belonging to Chipinga Tea Estates was destroyed by a landmine, killing the driver and his assistant. Had the truck encountered the mine on its return journey, it would have been packed to the gunwales with contract tea pickers, most of whom would probably have been killed. A police follow-up section was ambushed the following morning, and later that month a group of guerrillas attacked Hogwe Farm near Chipinga. On the evening of 29 February, guerrillas entered the Pungwe Hotel in the Honde Valley and opened fire randomly, injuring seven people. A passing Special Branch vehicle was spotted by a guard detachment and raked with gunfire, killing three black personnel.

On the diplomatic front, things moved just as quickly. President Samora Machel closed the border on 3 March, announcing that Mozambique was now in a state of war with Rhodesia. Surprisingly, the Rhodesians did not anticipate this and lost 2,300 pieces of Rhodesia Railways rolling stock, one-sixth of the corporation's entire fleet. As sanctions bit deeper into the national economy, such losses were not to be taken lightly.

In the meanwhile, in the early evening of 18 April, four South African tourists riding two motorcycles came upon the scene of a robbery on the Fort Victoria-Beit Bridge road. A group of twelve guerrillas established a makeshift roadblock and were in the process of robbing the occupants of two cars travelling towards Salisbury. Not immediately grasping the seriousness of the situation, one of the South Africans became belligerent, and the party was gunned down. One woman, although severely

injured, survived. The two motorcars seized the opportunity and sped off to raise the alarm.

To appreciate the crisis of vulnerability that this presented to the agricultural and economic heartland of Rhodesia, one need only glance at a map. The war suddenly reached into the lives of a majority of Rhodesian whites who had hitherto been more or less unaffected. A surge in public anxiety resulted inevitably in calls for the war to be extended across that border into Mozambique. In a series of statements released over the course of the next few weeks, Smith allowed something of the gravity of the situation to seep out. In a televised broadcast on 6 February he announced that, following the most severe incursions so far seen in the hot war, it had become evident that the eastern front had been activated. This development added fuel to rumours already circulating that the Cubans were disembarking en masse in Beira, bringing with them tanks and missiles.

In the meanwhile, on the home front, as a clear indication that international sanctions were at last beginning to bite, long-established international cigarette brands abruptly disappeared from the shelves in favour of new local brands free of licensing requirements. Dispensing with silver foil and cellophane packaging would, it was hoped, save the government US$1 million annually in foreign currency. Inflation crept up by two per cent in the first month of 1976, fuel allocations were cut by twenty per cent, foreign currency allowances were slashed, and the Rhodesian cricket team was pushed down to third place on the Currie Cup table.

Smith warned that hit-and-run attacks against white farms would escalate, landmine incidents would increase, and a barrage of psychological warfare could be expected in an attempt to convince white Rhodesia of the hopelessness of its cause. Moreover, South Africa could no longer be relied upon in the event of an all-out terrorist war. “Unfortunately.” Smith lamented, “There is no Churchill alive today to bring home to them the folly of such appeasement.”

The Prime Minister then let slip the extent of his own nervous anxiety, by allowing it to be known that he might actually consider abandoning UDI if it could be was proven to him that it was essential to do so. A little later he evidently thought better of this, for on 20 March 1976 he made what was perhaps the most iconic utterance of his career. In an

interview with the British ITN network, he remarked: “I don't believe in majority rule ever in Rhodesia, not in a thousand years.”

14
The Iron Fist

We will win through this thing by keeping our heads cool, our wits sharp, our faith bright, and our powder very dry. God bless you all –
Umtali Post August 1976

During 1975, the Selous Scout Regiment, born as an internal reconnaissance unit, began to slip deeper into the role that would later build much of its legend. Responsibility for external operations had traditionally relied on collaboration between the SAS and the CIO, but as the war progressed, the all-white SAS began steadily to lose ground to the racially mixed Selous Scouts. Quite obviously, SAS patrols could not easily merge into populated areas, and this placed them at a disadvantage. A second factor that often allowed the Selous Scouts to exceed their original mandate was the fact that Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Reid Daly, enjoyed something of a personal rapport with Army Commander General Peter Walls. Reid Daly was among many now arguing that the war could only be won through aggressive action carried directly to the enemy. While this was not a particularly original theme, Reid Daly was convinced that the Selous Scouts was the natural choice to carry out this kind of work, and in no small degree, this had already been proven.

In September 1974, the Selous Scouts were successfully employed on an ad hoc operation to kidnap a high-ranking ZIPRA official from Francistown. In March 1975, a small force of twenty Selous Scouts crossed the northeast border into Mozambique where intelligence indicated the existence of an important staging post for guerrillas moving to Rhodesia. The mission was experimental, and the group set off on the understanding that air support would be countenanced only if severe casualty evacuation was required. It was also understood that the Government would disclaim responsibility for any failures or personnel captured by the enemy. In the event, after a hard march, the Scouts arrived at the base to discover that cholera had done their work for them. Those guerrillas who had not died of the disease had fled. This operation was followed a few months later by another small patrol that entered Mozambique through the cordon sanitaire, and successfully kidnapped a low-ranking FRELIMO official and a ZANLA contact man.

Although these incursions were satisfying, they achieved relatively little due to the severe operational limitations imposed by the Defence Ministry, which itself was limited by the Cabinet. Reid Daly began pressing hard for permission to penetrate deeper into Mozambique, with much greater force, and gradually the Government came round to this inevitability. The South Africans, however, were still determined to tread as lightly as possible in the region, so caution remained the keyword. Restrictions included the previously imposed moratorium on air support, as well as a limit on attacks beyond five kilometres of the border, and no attacks whatsoever were to be launched against FRELIMO. Upon this understanding, Colonel Ron Reid Daly retreated to his command bunker where he put together a plan to deploy the first serious attack group into Mozambique.

Thus, on 17 January 1976, a small group of Selous Scouts inconclusively attacked a ZANLA staging camp, and a month later raided another ZANLA transit camp close to the three-cornered frontier of Rhodesia, Mozambique and South Africa. Again, with only three kills confirmed, these attacks hardly justified the input, but the Regiment was gathering essential experience and intelligence, and at the same time stirring up a healthy ferment along ZANLA and FRELIMO supply lines.

It was at about this time that Mozambican President Samora Machel made the decision to close the border between Mozambique and Rhodesia, after entertaining for a short while the idea of an open relationship. Clearly, the Rhodesian Government had no interest in reciprocating, and for the first time, the government of Mozambique committed itself to uphold international sanctions. Rhodesia and Mozambique were now effectively at war, and as if to consummate this, another unique concept came into being. Under the direction of the CIO, a pseudo-Mozambican resistance movement was founded, styled the *Resistênicia Nacional Moçambicana*, or ‘Renamo’. At its founding, this organisation was perhaps better known as the *Movimento Nacional da Resistência de Moçambique*, or simply MNR.

The MNR was devised as a tool to destabilise the FRELIMO government and to punish it for hosting ZANLA guerrilla bases and supporting terrorist activity in Rhodesia, but also to create a widely dispersed intelligence network within Mozambique itself. The first MNR training camp was located outside Rusape and fell under the command of CIO liaison officer Peter Burt. The camp was later moved to a farm at Odzi

close to Umtali. The first batch of operational combatants was drawn from the ranks of former Portuguese pseudo unit known as *Flechas,* or 'Arrows'. A former FRELIMO detachment commander, Andre Matangaidze, known as Commandant Andre, was placed in overall command. The group's first operation was planned as a recruitment effort and was mounted by a combined force of MNR and SAS on the Sacudzo Re-education Centre, about fifteen miles north of Gorongoza in the Manica Province of Mozambique. Approximately 500 anti-FRELIMO dissidents were freed in this operation and invited to join the MNR, and about 300 did.

The MNR then went on to raise hell, supplied and funded by the Rhodesian security services, and operationally supported by the SAS. The large-scale banditry that resulted so offended Machel that he complained bitterly and frequently on the international stage. As a reward for his resolve in upholding international sanctions, Mozambique was offered UN financial compensation for her monetary losses, which was also tacitly intended to persuade Machel to assist Mugabe in his struggle for dominance over ZIPRA. London gave an initial sum of £15 million to this cause, which prompted P.K. van der Byl to comment on the absurdity of a Marxist regime being paid by Britain to destroy what had once been the pride of the British Empire.

The MNR, of course, would never have been as effective as it was without the support of the SAS, which provided operational credibility to a guerrilla organisation that conspicuously lacked genuine popular support. Historians of the Rhodesian war have tended to press the case that the creation of the MNR was a successful strategy just because it *did* tap into a deep pool of latent discontent, but this author finds this unlikely. FRELIMO was ubiquitous and dominated government, the military and the police. It started out as a unity movement but evolved into a Cuban-style communist party based on a personality cult centred around Samora Machel. Opposition to it was cruelly discouraged, and where it did exist, it usually operated on tribal or ideological lines. Organisations expressing opposition to FRELIMO tended to have an intellectual flavour with neither broad cohesion nor any real military potential. There was a vague hope in Rhodesia that popular resistance would crystallise around the MNR, but without Rhodesian material support, and later South African, the military activities of the MNR would and did evaporate.

Ken Flower was probably the one most directly responsible for the birth of the MNR and, as with the Selous Scouts, he was dismayed in the end by the monster that grew out of his creation. As time passed, Mozambique stumbled from a colonial war to war with Rhodesia, and then to a bitter and bloody civil war that was aided and funded almost exclusively by South Africa. FRELIMO survived, but the cost in human suffering was immeasurable. Ken Flower felt a particular responsibility for the many thousands of lives destroyed in these conflicts, and he carried that guilt with him to his grave.

ZANU, in the meanwhile, set up a propaganda broadcasting service in Maputo styled the Voice of Zimbabwe or VOZ. VOZ utilised the services of a homegrown Lord Haw Haw in the form of Scotsman Ian Christie, who from his studio in Maputo relentlessly vilified the minority government in Salisbury. In competition, and in support of the MNR, the CIO set up a Portuguese language alternative called The 'Voice of Free Africa', or *A Voz da Africa Livre*, which broadcast through a massive transmitter based outside Gwelo, nicknamed 'Big Bertha'. This station gathered such a following in Mozambique that, in due course, a distressed Samora Machel commissioned East German engineers to block it. Such was the zest of Big Bertha, however, that even with the most sophisticated equipment this effort failed.

The Selous Scouts raids into Mozambique, in the meanwhile, continued and grew in sophistication. A second attack on Caponda Base, a relatively small installation, was followed by the first, and much more audacious flying column attack. In May 1976, Selous Scouts hit targets in Gaza Province using Mercedes Unimogs disguised in FRELIMO livery. This was followed in June by similar raids aimed at Mapai and Chicualacuala. The latter, Operation *Long John*, involved sending a unit into South Africa posing as tourists so that they could enter the Gaza province of Mozambique through the Eastern Transvaal. This particular operation degenerated into a brawling firefight that resulted in the death of Selous Scout Jannie Nel and the almost fatal injuries of Selous Scouts Dale Collet and Tim Baxter. In extremis, helicopters were authorised to pick up casualties, while an air strike was guided in to neutralise resistance. It was this alone that allowed the remainder of the attack force to make good their escape. The enemy body count, however, helped to compensate somewhat for these reverses. Nineteen ZANLA guerrillas lay dead with eighteen

wounded. This had been the most spectacular operation so far, although the first to have claimed a Rhodesian life.

It had been observed, in the meanwhile, that the primary conduit of insurgent traffic into the *Thrasher* operational area was through the Honde Valley. The Honde Valley, a picturesque catchment in the lee of Inyangani Mountain was, on the Rhodesian side at least, thickly populated with native villages, interspersed with a handful of commercial tea estates. The question of how to plug this flow challenged military planner considerably until the routine interrogation of a captured guerrilla revealed the existence of a sizable ZANLA base vaguely indicated to be on the Pungwe River. More detailed questioning of captures revealed that this installation was the main logistics base for ZANLA guerrillas being channelled into the Thrasher operational area.

The Rhodesian Air Force was ordered to conduct an aerial survey of the Pungwe catchment area to pinpoint the base. Since the days that Frank Johnson and Doctor Jim had punted down that same river in their underwear, things had changed significantly. The landscape was now densely inhabited, which made locating the position of a base in the midst of it all very difficult. The operation consumed a great deal of Air Force reconnaissance time with, in the end, very little to show for it.

The base was in fact located a few degrees wide of where intelligence reports had initially indicated, and in the end, it was only accidentally located during a flight diversion around bad weather. Images were produced that revealed 800 or more people mustering in a substantial emplacement, sited beside a tributary of the Pungwe called the Nyadzonia River. This discovery generated tremendous excitement in security circles, which subsided somewhat as the practicalities of dealing with such a large concentration of manpower were examined.

Eventually, another flying column attack was agreed, and in the early hours of 9 August 1986, the Nyadzonia Base was assaulted by a multi-racial force of eighty-four Selous Scouts carried in by a small complement of Ferret armoured cars and ten heavily armed Unimogs once again disguised in FRELIMO livery. The raid has since become iconic and was arguably the definitive Selous Scouts special force infantry operation of the war. It was a clinically conducted attack that inflicted catastrophic casualties on the occupants of the base, with no loss of Rhodesian life.

Exactly how many people died in the attack on Nyadzonia Base has never been accurately established. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 675 died, and 675 were wounded. The equal number listed as dead and injured implied, as Reid Daly suggested, a case of over-simplified mathematics. Ex-ZANLA guerrilla, Alexander Kanengoni, witnessed the aftermath and recorded his rather haunting impressions in an article written some years later for the Zimbabwean *Sunday Times*.

"At Nyadzonia, it took us over a week to bury the nearly 2,000 people who had perished in the horrendous incident. And as we walked away from the horrible place, I was afraid to turn back and see the thousand or more sobbing shadows with their heads bowed, following us, refusing to be left behind and got [sic] forgotten."

Kanengoni was one of many who claimed both repeatedly and insistently that the dead of Nyadzonia were refugee women and children. The Rhodesian Security Forces, on the other hand, were adamant that those killed were either trained guerrillas or recruits in training. In fact, Nyadzonia was, without doubt, a military installation, and Edgar Tekere later confirmed this in an interview conducted for Granada Television as part of the End of Empire series. Further corroboration was provided the following year when a combined SAS and RLI raid on Chimoio in Mozambique unearthed the official ZANLA report on the incident which listed 1,028 killed, 309 wounded and 1,000 missing. The language of the report strongly suggested that the Nyadzonia Base had been a full ZANLA military facility.

In the face of this evidence, Ken Flower, somewhat unexpectedly, stated his view that the base was nothing more than a staging camp where some low-level training took place. As he later put it when the matter was revealed to the Rhodesian public: "OCC's communiqué was 'terse', because we were not prepared to take responsibility for lying about the nature of the raid, and we could not devise a formula which would account for the death of such a large number of unarmed, untrained people."

In the aftermath of the Nyadzonia Raid, Flower virtually disowned the Selous Scouts. As Director General of the CIO, he was sternly professional in his duties, but his personal bias did not tilt in favour of Ian Smith or the Rhodesian Front Government. He later expressed regret at what he considered to be the blunders and excesses of the Rhodesian war.

What perhaps upset him most was that having been instrumental in designing the blueprint of the Selous Scouts, he had no control over the unit evolving from a compact and straightforward pseudo operations group into a formidable, special force infantry strike force. The Nyadzonia Raid caused a rift between him and Selous Scouts commander Ron Reid Daly that spilt over into acrimony and distrust between the Selous Scouts and the CIO, and was a rift that would never heal.

Josiah Tongogara

15
The Year of the People's Storm

it would not have been predicted by any observer of American politics that a Republican administration would take the lead in bringing about the breakthrough to majority rule in Southern Africa. Majority rule had been a liberal cause, never translated into an operational policy – **Henry Kissinger**

Three days after the Nyadzonia raid, the border town of Umtali suffered a bombardment launched from Mozambique. A handful of rockets and mortars fell about the city in an action lasting about forty minutes or so. The gung-ho humour of white Rhodesia under siege was illustrated on a T-shirt produced a few days later that featured a beer bottle fitted with a mortar fin above a caption reading: 'Come to Umtali and get bombed!' These T-shirts became collector's items and were shipped internationally in large quantities as souvenirs of the Rhodesian War.

The political fallout of the Nyadzonia Raid, however, was much more severe. Condemnation was universal, and not surprisingly so because such grotesquely lopsided casualty figures made it impossible for the operation to be seen internationally as anything other than a genocidal attack. Be it refugees, women, children, guerrillas, trained or untrained, armed or otherwise, it hardly mattered. It was a propaganda coup for ZANU, and sympathy was ruthlessly milked worldwide. Almost incidental to this was the massive cost in human life, as both sides bickered over who between them was the worst, the most inhuman and degraded in a war increasingly without rules, and probably no different from any other war.

White Rhodesians at that point could scarcely have given a damn what the outside world thought about its revised tactics. Europeans, with their self-loathing and bloated consciences, had no business expressing opinions on their kith and kin who were battling for survival on the dark side. International support for the liberation agenda of the black nations of Africa reeked of hypocrisy. While the OAU vilified Rhodesia, chairman and commissioner of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Idi Amin, dictator of Uganda, ruled with all the characteristics of psychosis. Zaire was mired in catastrophic corruption, the Central African Republic was the canvas upon which Jean Bédel Bokassa wrote large his insane ambitions and

Francisco Marcías Nguema of Equatorial Guinea set a yet unbeaten record of violence, demagoguery and corruption. The world could go to hell, but that, of course, was the world minus South Africa.

The Rhodesian Ambassador to Pretoria was summoned to an audience with Vorster, who expressed his strong disapproval and disappointment that the Nyadzonia raid had gone ahead without his prior clearance. If Ian Smith was inclined to ignore this rebuke, which it was, he could hardly ignore the subsequent withdrawal of South African helicopters and aircrews on loan to Rhodesia, nor the chronic backlog of rail traffic south of the Limpopo. It has been said that P.K. van der Byl authorised the raid on his own initiative, and in doing so plunged the Rhodesian Government into a crisis. If this was so, the Defence Minister suffered no public rebuke, and why should he? He won the nation a much-needed reprieve from what would have been a devastating wave of guerrilla incursions, and in his dual role as Foreign Minister, he had the pleasure of rubbing Vorster's nose in it before he was fired and given the reasonably harmless portfolio of Public Service.

Vorster, however, was not finished. The Nyadzonia raid signalled the start of another period of direct and unwanted South African interference. This time the stakes were much higher, however, because South Africa itself was at war, and while Vorster was, at last, prepared to accept that mistakes had been made, in rectifying them he was once again willing to use Rhodesia as collateral.

The Marxist takeover in Mozambique had proved in the end to be very tricky to handle, so Détente was for the time being quietly buried. With this lesson learned, however, Pretoria tended to view the imminent communist takeover of Angola in a much less benevolent light. The transfer of power in Mozambique had been relatively straightforward, mainly because FRELIMO suffered no competition. In Angola, however, the situation was very different. Three powerful liberation groups contested the immediate political fate of this vast country, which was in itself a recipe for bloody and almost perpetual civil war. It was also an ideal opportunity for the Soviets to hoist their standard in Southern Africa, and as Cuban and Soviet ground forces began arriving in Angola, South Africa became very anxious indeed.

This, in turn, presented the United States with an opportunity. Angola was as worrying for the Americans as it was for the South Africans,

but after Vietnam, GIs on the ground was no real option. Henry Kissinger made his first diplomatic appearance in Africa at about this time. A congruity of interests prompted a cordial relationship between the United States and South Africa, and while the political risks of backing South Africa in a war in Angola were significant, they were less than the risk of another Vietnam. Secrecy, of course, was vital, since Kissinger could hardly win friends and influence people in black Africa while he was in bed with South Africa. Nonetheless, in August 1975, South Africa, with covert CIA assistance, launched an invasion of Angola codenamed Operation *Savannah,* that rolled up 1,000-miles of Angolan territory in thirty-three days. It stopped, however, or perhaps was stopped at the very gates of Luanda, for reasons both strategic and political, which effectively handed Angola over to Soviet interests.

Washington's worst fears were realised, and as details of American involvement began to surface, and in the face of almost universal black condemnation, Kissinger was forced to look around for a foil, and the obvious candidate was Rhodesia. He made an offer to John Vorster that the latter could hardly refuse. American support for anti-Marxist forces in Angola would continue, and no political pressure would be applied in the short term over the future of South West Africa. Also, the United States would strive to overcome international resistance to the granting of $460 million in IMF credits to South Africa, and for all this, South Africa need only ratchet up the pressure on Rhodesia.

And so it was that in the first week of September, Smith was summoned to Pretoria, and there Vorster briefed him on the new minimum conditions for a continuation of South African support. No independence before majority rule, and majority rule within two years. Moreover, negotiations towards that end must be authentic, not protracted and not used as a means either to buy time or thwart genuine progress. Implicit, although not spoken, was an understanding that Smith himself was the main impediment to progress.

Smith arrived in Pretoria prepared for the worst, and in a way he was relieved. The war was moving towards its decisive phase, and two years was a long time. He warned Vorster for the record that Rhodesia was prepared if pushed too far to fight on to the bitter end. Vorster nodded and accepted this at face value. South Africa held all the cards at that point and could bring Rhodesia to her knees in a fortnight. Vorster was also aware that

ringing cries of patriotism, and fighting to the death and suchlike, all sounded good on paper, but the people doing the fighting would likely be on an aircraft to Australia or New Zealand long before the last man was put in the line. Smith confirmed this view when he reflected later in his memoirs: “If Rhodesians believed it was a sellout, there would be a mass exodus of skills, expertise, professionalism and investment, with resultant disaster.”

Here indeed lay the root of Smith’s dilemma. Such an observation hardly describes a nation of patriots willing to fight to the death, but rather a discerning community of expatriates who, if push came to shove, could leave the country and make their homes elsewhere. African whites did exist, and Smith was as much one of these as any, but even he could easily relocate to Britain, Australia or South Africa if conditions became untenable. It is instructive to note that only 50,000 or so of the 250,000 plus whites resident in Rhodesia at that time were holders of a Rhodesian passport. The majority of the remainder, including Smith, held British passports, with the balance mainly South African.

Kissinger, in the meanwhile, preceded his visit to South Africa with a whirlwind tour of black Africa, visiting Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire, Liberia and Senegal, and finally Zambia, where he delivered his keynote policy speech. In it, he announced a new era in United States policy towards Africa, while at the same time issuing a stern warning to Salisbury that it could expect no support from the United States. Financial assistance was promised to those countries experiencing hardship because of their support for the armed struggle. The Frontline States could also look forward to generous compensation for their help in bringing the Zimbabwean nationalists to the negotiating table. Then, on 16 September 1976, he arrived in South Africa for his much-anticipated meeting with Ian Smith.

The ostensible reason for Smith’s visit to South was to attend an All Blacks-Springboks international rugby fixture at Ellis Park, which John Vorster, incidentally, also attended. The current state of relations between Salisbury and Pretoria was illustrated quite clearly when Smith was not invited to share Vorster’s VIP box. “The President of the Rugby Union apologised,” Smith later remarked, “saying that he had been asked to put me aside from the main party. Fortunately, that kind of thing has no effect on me, but those who were accompanying me were taken aback at the pettiness and discourtesy.”

Later, in a far more civil atmosphere, Kissinger and Smith met at the American Ambassador's residence in Pretoria. Kissinger was, of course, widely distrusted in Rhodesia, but on this occasion, Smith made the rare concession of taking the American Secretary of State at face value. Dispensing with formalities, Kissinger adopted a confidential air and guided an apprehensive Smith into a side room. There the two held a brief and private discussion. In the view of the United States, Smith was told, the conflict in Rhodesia, if not resolved, would ultimately lead the entire region into a much broader racial and ideological war, and the US had no particular interest in being dragged into another of those.

"We are fighting world communism." He explained, as if Smith did not already know this. "The day will come when Communism will rule the world: all we are doing is holding out for time."

Smith was given no opportunity to plead his case, for the essence of what was said to him was direct and straightforward, and did not invite discussion. The monologue was concluded with an apology for the fact that what was on offer was quite obviously not attractive. However, majority rule in two years, with one or two provisions (see footnote), and above all, honestly negotiated, was the last word on the matter. Take it or leave it.[10]

"Mr Prime Minister," Kissinger concluded, in his lugubrious style, "this is the first time in my career that I have asked anyone to commit political suicide."

Having thus primed Smith for the worst, he added that what was on the table now was the best that could be achieved under the circumstances, and moreover, this was probably the last opportunity for white Rhodesia to find an acceptable settlement. If it failed, Smith and his people would be cut adrift to face the consequences of a bleeding war alone. Furthermore, if Smith chose to reject the offer, he might then look forward to dealing with Jimmy Carter, who was poised to topple the administration of Gerald Ford. Carter was famously liberal, and white Rhodesia could expect little intrinsic sympathy from him.

Kissinger was later criticised for referring to Smith as 'Prime Minister' when technically he was not recognised as such. The Secretary of State commented in reply: "[Yes] I called him Mr Prime Minister. I did not think it would do any damage to say that because the whole purpose of the exercise was to deprive him of the position as Prime Minister of Rhodesia."

If Kissinger delivered the uppercut that turned Smith's knees to water, then it was Vorster who laid him on the canvas. When, an hour or so later, the South African Prime Minister put in an appearance at the meeting, he made it clear to Smith that Pretoria could not afford to continue to supporting Rhodesia either financially or militarily. Not only was this becoming a strain on South Africa's own economy, but it was also adding to the weight of diplomatic pressure that the country was feeling, in the aftermath of the Soweto riots, to deal with its own race landscape.

Vorster then went on to demand from Smith an immediate decision on the matter. Unpleasant scenes followed when Rhodesian Cabinet Ministers Jack Musset and Desmond Lardner-Burke momentarily lost their composure and verbally attacked Vorster, who had to leave the room briefly. He returned with his dignity ruffled, but his position unchanged. Kissinger, in his more polished style, added the same note of urgency, and Smith reluctantly agreed. He was quick to add, however, that he anticipated either constipation or backsliding from the blacks, which Vorster assured him would not happen. Since both Zambia and Mozambique were desperate to bring an end to the war, they would pressure their proxies to comply. Smith had little say about this, for to do so would have antagonised Vorster, and would anyway have been a waste of time.

The unbearable tension was broken for a moment, by a contrived and somewhat theatrical leap onto the stage by Kissinger's wife Nancy, who embraced Smith and engaged him in a moment of intimate conversation. Whether this was stage-managed to disarm Smith or, as Nancy Kissinger swore, was only that she was an admirer and sympathiser of Smith and Rhodesia, is probably irrelevant. Kissinger's work was done, and his closing comments revealed what could only have been a genuinely felt sadness. "For what must have been the most painful day of their lives', he later wrote, 'the Rhodesians behaved with great dignity."

Back home, Smith was apt to echo Churchill in his search for hope. Since there was no choice in the matter, his Cabinet and parliamentary caucus accepted the plan, and on 24 September, he sat down in front of a camera and delivered a sombre address to the nation. "This is not the end." He assured his people. "It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

The critical weakness in the Smith-Kissinger agreement, of course, was the fact that it had been agreed to by Smith and Kissinger alone. No

local black opinion had been sought or given, which to the Frontline leaders, in a mood of compromise, was a forgivable oversight. So anxious were they by then for a general agreement that they were willing to ignore many of these apparent inconsistencies. Nyerere, however, could not resist querying a few problematic points, one of which was an agreement that the ministries of Defence and of Law and Order remain in white hands. Another was a two-tier system of government, with a white chairman of a proposed Council of State. It was noted that on both these points Kissinger had exceeded previously agreed limitations.

Nonetheless, the plan was generally accepted on the Frontline, but only on the basis of it being a minimum negotiating position. Mugabe, of course, laughed when he heard the news. To a jeering audience of guerrillas he had this to say:

"What is required is the total destruction of Smith's army and immediate replacement by ZANU forces…we shouldn't worry about the Kissinger-British proposals. They can put in any puppet government they want, but a puppet government cannot contain us."

This, of course, was as empty as Smith's threats to fight to the very last man. The more prosaic truth was that Samora Machel and Kenneth Kaunda were each indeed nearing the end of their tether. They were anxious that the guerrilla leaders understand the fact that Frontline sponsorship and support was not to be viewed as open-ended. In the aftermath of the Nyadzonia Raid, Machel went further and summoned all the nationalist leaders to Maputo to hear their views, and to rub their noses in the soil of war. Machel was a warrior and unafraid of the face of conflict, but if the nationalists were to expect solidarity from Mozambique in the face of such attacks as these, what were they going to give in exchange? After taking a moment to express his sorrow at the loss of life, Machel went on to reprimand his audience for their unseemly bickering in the face of such a determined enemy. He then arranged a trip to Nyadzonia to show them all the mass graves, the broken, the wounded and the dying. It was educational for some to see such sights, most for the very first time. Robert Mugabe was among these. However, it was no less salutary for him and others to note that of the conscious injured, none were willing to talk to, or even greet anybody but Mugabe.

Following this lesson, the nationalists were transported to a meeting with all the active Frontline leaders in Dar-es-Salaam, and it was hoped that

once and for all the feuding parties could be driven towards a formula for peace. The negotiations that might follow the Kissinger agreement would have at least a passing chance of success if everyone could work together. After a stern briefing, Nyerere and his colleagues left the Zimbabweans alone with instructions not to emerge from the meeting unless an agreement had been reached. A long and bruising closed-door session followed, producing yet another antipathetic union that was ratified in early October, and became known as the ‘Patriotic Front’. This arrangement represented the militant nationalists with Mugabe unhappily wed to Nkomo. The others were left to find a home somewhere in the shadow of these two. The race for the presidency of a free Zimbabwe was now officially a two-horse affair.

Robert Mugabe in Geneva flanked on his right by Edgar Tekere

16
Geneva

Without unity, there is no future for Africa – **Julius Nyerere**

On 29 September, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland announced the convening of a British sponsored conference, to be held anywhere in southern Africa that suited all parties. Since no such venue could be agreed on, it was ultimately held in Geneva. The British Government, by now utterly disillusioned by the whole Rhodesian affair, and perhaps feeling the first pains of another Northern Ireland, noticeably dragged its feet. As Prime Minister James Callaghan suggested more than once, there was virtually no prospect of success as long as Smith and his hardliners remained in power, and this was even more the case now that the militant nationalist factions were united under the ostensible leadership of Mugabe. A fair indication of British indifference to the whole business was the choice of chairman. Ivor Richard was a corpulent, well-meaning and pleasant man, but as an MP and British ambassador to the United Nations, he was hardly of the upper strata. He had neither the political qualifications nor the moral authority to arbitrate between two such seasoned political brawlers as Robert Mugabe and Ian Smith.

Geneva was to be Mugabe's international debut, and while he held out no particular hope for a settlement, he was anxious to fly his colours well. He was also no doubt concerned that the mood exhibited in Switzerland be one of determination and commitment, reflecting the drive and militancy that he brought to the struggle. Nkomo, of course, although residing very much in Mugabe's shadow, was nonetheless alert to any opportunity to prove that he was an equal partner. The two were prepared to agree on one thing only, and that was complete opposition to the Kissinger proposals. Bishop Muzorewa represented the ANC, and although he had no substantive support, he kept beside him two symbolically empty seats, one for Edison Sithole, who had by then been missing for a year, and another for Enos Nkala, who was still in detention.

Mugabe's opening move, in the meanwhile, set the tone. He insisted that Ndabaningi Sithole under no circumstances be permitted to attend the conference, and certainly not under the aegis of ZANU. Sithole, whom Mugabe had taken to calling the 'Reverend Herring', still enjoyed some

residual sympathy and support from, among others, Nyerere, and it was Nyerere who insisted that he attend. Mugabe then made his own attendance conditional on Josiah Tongogara, and others still detained at Mpima Prison in Zambia, being released to join his delegation. This was agreed to, and Tongogara was released. It was, incidentally, the first time that he and Mugabe met in person.

Alongside these principals, a rather forlorn delegation of influential Rhodesian whites known as the 'Five White Presidents' attended, with a mandate to represent Rhodesian agriculture, commerce and industry. One of them was Hardwicke Holderness, whose mission it was to reconcile the Rhodesian Front delegation with any of the nationalists interested in reconciliation. Of these, there were few, and Robert Mugabe was manifestly not among them. From the outset, Mugabe's objective was to make any settlement or agreement impossible, and to this end, he tested the range of his guns on Ivor Richard.

Mugabe searched for, and immediately found fault with the chairman. He protested that Richard was too junior to chair such an important conference, and demanded his replacement. Richard was dismayed but held his ground. Upon failing to have him replaced, Mugabe then began to heap pressure on him, insisting that the Rhodesian delegation be recognised only as members of the British delegation, which, of course, put Richard in an extremely awkward position. Smith was predictably outraged when Richard rather hopefully handed him his official name tag listing him as a member of the 'Smith Delegation'. Smith immediately had a new set of cards printed naming his party as the 'Official Rhodesian Government Delegation'.

Thus the ill-fated Geneva Conference began. Smith early on demonstrated his ability to match Mugabe by making it clear that the sole item on the agenda was the interim government as agreed in Pretoria, and according to the Kissinger plan. John Vorster released a supporting statement, declaring that a viable settlement could only be achieved within Kissinger's five principles. It no doubt gave Smith some satisfaction to note that, as the conference opened, the Rhodesian Army struck at ZANLA camps in Tete and Gaza, and not a murmur of protest was heard from Pretoria. On the strength of this, Smith made it his business to brook no negotiation. He stuck rigidly to the period of two years for the implementation of majority rule while Mugabe tried to press for a handover

within one. Smith also made the provocative point that Kissinger had made mention only of majority rule, without specifying that this should mean black majority rule. Not to be outdone Mugabe countered by outlining to the press his vision of a future Zimbabwe.

"…we are socialist', he said, "and we shall draw on the socialist systems of Mozambique and Tanzania. In Zimbabwe, none of the white exploiters will be allowed to keep an acre of their land.'

Smith fired back with a stab at Mugabe's slight frame, and rather shambling, effeminate gait. Mugabe, Smith said, was "…riding on cloud nine with a camouflage terrorist uniform. I don't think he has heard a shot fired in anger in his life."

Smith, of course, was quite right. Mugabe was not by any means a man's man, as Tongogara was, for example, but he was a fighter nonetheless. At 20h30 on the evening of 20 December, a ZANLA platoon entered the labour compound of the Aberfoyle Tea Estate in the Honde Valley and gathered together all the men, women and children they could find. These were then marched to the gates of the Eastern Highlands Tea Factory where twenty-seven men were gunned down in front of their horrified families. Nine of them were migrant workers from Mozambique and eight from Malawi. The incident sent a clear message to the black workers of the district and another to the assembled press and delegates in Geneva.

It would not be entirely fair to say that Smith and his party were jubilant at this turn of events, but the killings could not have been better timed to illustrate, in the sophistication of Geneva, what kind of murderous thugs they were dealing with. A satisfying uproar was accompanied by tight-lipped silence from the nationalist camp as journalists were quickly flown out to Rhodesia. Retribution meted out by the Rhodesian Security Forces was, as usual, swift and effective. In internal counter-insurgency operations, 321 guerrillas were killed, compared to 304 for the whole of 1975. Externally, the SAS, the Selous Scouts and the RLI launched Operation *Mardon*, a series of attacks against targets in the Tete and Gaza provinces of Mozambique. Several individual camps were attacked, and significant numbers of ZANLA personnel killed for the loss of two Rhodesian soldiers. Quantities of communist weaponry were also recovered.

In the aftermath, once again, not a whisper of complaint was heard in Geneva, London or Pretoria. South Africa had pushed Rhodesia to Geneva, and now it was incumbent on the Republic to make sure she survived long enough to effect an all-party settlement. Within a few days, another combined SAS and RLI force neutralised Mavue Base in Mozambique, killing thirty-one ZANLA guerrillas. Then, in early December, the two units attacked a camp at Rambanayi in Mozambique, severely mauling a platoon of Tanzanian troops stationed there. In direct response to the Honde Valley killings, the SAS mounted a raid on the adjacent town of Mavonde in Mozambique, killing forty-four members of ZANLA.

In spite of all this, the foot-dragging in Geneva continued, and the general deadlock persisted. Smith temporarily gave up, and in early November left for home, informing Ivor Richard that he would return as soon as there appeared to be some commitment to progress. A few weeks later he did return, but only to find Richard just as bogged down and irritated as before. His failure to pin the nationalist delegations down to a firm agenda was abject, and in early December he too flew home to London to consult with the Foreign Office. This left the conference in limbo for a few days, until Anthony Crosland announced a brief adjournment for the Christmas season. With palpable relief, the various delegations packed up and went their separate ways. The conference never reconvened.

Ivor Richard attempted to arouse renewed dialogue by following the Rhodesians back to Salisbury, but what had died in Switzerland could not be revived in Rhodesia. Having gone out of his way to honour the Kissinger plan, Smith could see no point in trying again. As far as he was concerned, the British were “now conniving with communist guerrillas in their unscrupulous plan to achieve their evil objective”. Richard left Rhodesia with something of a flea in his ear and was apt to wonder if the British role in the Rhodesian crisis was finally over. On his way back from Geneva, in the meanwhile, Joshua Nkomo slipped into Rhodesia without being immediately arrested. In Geneva, Mugabe had as manifestly eclipsed Nkomo as he had unnerved Smith, and both men, therefore, began to see the wisdom of reaching an accommodation between themselves.

As 1976 drew to a close, the general atmosphere of failure did not appear to depress the Rhodesians quite as much as it did the British. Vorster seemed to have temporarily lost interest in Rhodesia, and there were no

complaints about that fact north of the border. The Rhodesian Security Forces were raiding ever deeper into Mozambique, and enjoying conspicuous success. If there was a window of opportunity to fight the war without limitation or restraint, the white Rhodesian public was prepared to climb through it. Most still believed that a political solution was possible, but only after the nationalists had been sufficiently chastened to trim their negotiating sails. So, as Smith and Nkomo resumed dialogue, the war went on.

17
Mugabe Stamps His Mark

Our party must continue to strike fear in the heart of the white man, our real enemy – **Robert Mugabe**

It is true that Mugabe was no man of action. Once or twice he did try to wear camouflage and carry an assault rifle, but the effect was more that of a costume party than a serious African warlord. That is not to say that he was not to be taken seriously, because he was, although he tended to be judged more by his muscular intellect and Machiavellian methodology than his limp handshake and shambling, effeminate manners. As a military poseur, however, he had no hope of winning the respect of the young ZANLA commanders, or in any way commanding an armed force. He was no Samora Machel, and it was for this reason and no other that he engineered Josiah Tongogara's release from prison to attend the Geneva Conference.

While the Mgagao Declaration identified Mugabe as a strong leader, the first two executive decisions forced upon him – the formation of the Patriotic Front and attending the Geneva Conference – did not appear to confirm this. For the sake of all those who were watching his debutante performance, and taking notes, he needed to show independence, resolve and authority. His chief antagonist in the armed wing was a senior commander by the name of Dzinashe Muchingura, an ideologue committed to a FRELIMO-style amalgam of arms and politics. Mugabe, on the other hand, needed the armed wing but did not wish to be dictated to by the commanders. He recognised the armed wing as precisely that, a 'wing' of the party, under the overall control of the civilian, or non-combatant administration.

He was quick, therefore, to claim his due. In exchange for his reappointment as supreme military commander, Tongogara was required to pledge his full support to Mugabe. In January 1977, a meeting of the ZANU Central Committee was convened in Beira, and there Dzinashe Muchingura and several other senior commanders were arrested and held with neither trial nor representation. More senior cadre were picked up in various rebellious camps in Mozambique and Tanzania, and as expected, this provoked a poorly organised coup. The coup was immediately and ruthlessly put down by a force of Mugabe loyalists led by Rex Nhongo. A

handful of abducted party officials were released, and an additional 133 coup plotters united with their comrades in detention. Tongogara was now in command of the army, Rex Nhongo his second-in-command, and Mugabe was in control of both, and all was as it should be. Watching from the sidelines, Samora Machel, despite his aversion towards the new ZANU leader, was impressed.

Mugabe then moved the party headquarters to Maputo where a suite of offices on the Avenida Lenin was made available, after which he applied himself as a matter of urgency to prying loose blockages in the supply of arms and ammunition. July saw him in Peking, cementing a military alliance with the Chinese, and later in Yugoslavia, East Germany and Romania. Sally Mugabe became active and applied herself to the care and rehabilitation of Rhodesian refugees who by then were arriving in Mozambique in significant numbers. She sourced humanitarian assistance, mainly from Western European countries, that provided medical, hospital and other non-military facilities to guerrilla and refugee camps springing up all over Mozambique.

Despite ongoing Rhodesian Security Force raids, political uncertainties and leadership struggles, a planned offensive for the 1976 wet season successfully spread the line of conflict down the eastern flanks of Rhodesia. The mass disaffection of blacks inside Rhodesia combined with a growing sense of political empowerment to ferment an almost unstoppable flood of recruits. By then both Tanzania and Mozambique were providing ZANU with significant transport and logistical support to enable it to absorb most of this number into basic training. Over and above the provision of forward bases and transit facilities, Mozambique also laid on air transport for recruits moving between Tete and Tanzania, while the Tanzanian Government shipped trained guerrillas south by sea on board the locally owned SS *Mpanduzi*. Massive holding camps for the arming and deployment of trained men grew up in such locations as Chimoio and Tembue.

While all this was taking place in the ZANU camp, Joshua Nkomo was also hard at work building up a conventional strike capacity. While ZANU's central military philosophy echoed the Chinese principle of the human wave, Nkomo tended to work along more orthodox Soviet lines. He and a handful of Russian advisors implemented a policy that became known as the 'Turning Point Strategy', which called for the selective enlistment of

personnel to be trained in conventional and semi-conventional tactics. While ZANLA armed its cadre with AK 47 assault rifles, landmines and rocket-propelled grenades, and little more than that, ZIPRA's arsenal included recoilless artillery, tanks, aircraft and Strela shoulder-fired heat-seeking missiles. Units were upgraded into brigade and detachment formations, and senior commanders were coached to lead from the front. Most crucially, ZIPRA units were put into the field with the advantage of mobile communications equipment, which ZANLA never enjoyed. By late 1977 and early 1978, ZIPRA was effectively operational throughout Matabeleland, with reconnaissance patrols penetrating the Midlands and Victoria Provinces, and soon as far inland as the Urungwe and Karoi districts. By crossing the Zambezi at Kanyemba, and moving into the Sipolilo and Makonde districts of Mashonaland, ZIPRA began edging into traditional ZANLA turf, and in effect opening up a new front. The forward base of operations in these areas was Kavalamanja, situated a short distance outside the Zambian town of Luangwa. Therefore, from Kazungula, around three-quarters of the border areas to Vila Salazar, the war was being fought in absolute earnest.

The effect of this new commitment to the war was not long in being felt, and the Bristow family of the B-J-B Ranch, situated in the southeastern Lowveld, were one of the first to get that knock on their door. The family was woken in the early hours by a rattle of automatic gunfire. Norman Bristow had been expecting something like it for some time, and in disciplined order, he herded his family into a sandbagged bunker situated outside the homestead, from where a police reserve security detail, known as a 'bright light', was already returning fire. Bristow and his wife joined in the firefight while their fourteen-year-old son calmly worked to reload their weapons. The engagement lasted about ninety-minutes, and when the firing stopped, a dozen or so unidentified gunmen melted back into the African night.

The same scenario was repeated almost nightly somewhere or other in the contested border regions, and just as often a farm worker or two would be identified as a 'sell-out', and shot, or worse. On the evening of 6 February 1977, a group of armed men arrived at St Pauls Mission in Musami and gunned down nine members of the white clerical staff, three of whom were women. Only Father Dunstan Myerscough survived. ZANLA pointed the finger at the Selous Scouts, but this was later disproved by a

notebook found on the body of a ZANLA guerrilla which contained accurate details of the incident. One might be forgiven for thinking that this very convenient, but it is important to remember that without radio communications, ZANLA operational units received orders and communicated with their commanders in Mozambique by written notes. Detailed notebooks, therefore, were standard, and were the source of a great deal of Special Branch intelligence.

A month after the St. Paul's incident, two more white Roman Catholic missionaries, both women, were shot dead by guerrillas. As the year progressed, white civilian deaths continued to be reported, usually as a result of homestead attacks or vehicle ambushes. At the end of September, however, a white population growing increasingly desensitised to reports of violent death were shocked anew to open their newspapers and read a report on the murder in Chipinga of six-month-old Natasha Glenny, bayoneted to death while on the back of her black nanny.

Thus, 1977 staggered to a conclusion, but the killing did not end with the dawn of a new year. The death toll since 1972 then stood at 115 white and 2,000 black civilians, Security Force deaths for the same period were at 574, along with 3,596 confirmed guerrilla kills. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the good times were well and truly over. White Rhodesia, after eighty-seven years of existence, was in the throes of a last and bitter bid for survival.

Despite the carnage, however, there remained some residual hope that the future could be decided on the battlefield. In fact, 1977, as unnerving as it was to a great many whites, also saw a series of spectacular and high profile Security Force operations that buoyed the spirits and gave white Rhodesia the impression that the upper hand had been seized. The 1976-77 guerrilla offensive was ordered on the assumption that the Rhodesian Government would be too preoccupied with political distractions to attend to its military preparedness, but nothing could have been further from the truth. The Rhodesian Army, at that point streamlined, motivated and at the peak of its battle fitness, was enjoying an international reputation as the deadliest little army in the world. Cries from abroad that it was stocked with mercenaries was in fact evidence of the willingness of adventurers from all over the world to serve in and identify with this elite force, on terms no different to any other serving Rhodesian trooper. Pundits compared it to the Israeli Army, but Rhodesians were confident that it was

far superior. It was, in fact, ZANLA itself that was suffering political interference, as a trickle of ill-trained, poorly equipped and indifferently commanded cadres crossed the border into the waiting arms of Rhodesian Security Forces. If they survived border patrols and ambushes to penetrate the country, these men were usually quickly run to ground and killed in the kinds of numbers that satisfied even the hardest-line prophets of a total military solution.

However, the truth behind the statistics was somewhat less triumphant. The level of recruitment and the sheer numbers of enemy combatants now entering Rhodesia made any celebrations of victory premature. The annihilation of an entire revolutionary brigade ultimately had little effect on the progress of the war, while the loss of a single Rhodesian trooper, a strike aircraft or a helicopter was a loss that could only with difficulty be replaced. The fight was being lost, and no amount of desperate jingoism could change that fact. Those who did not support Smith seemed to be those even further to the right than he, while the more moderate voices of men like Allan Savory were either shouted down or ignored. The truth, so carefully hidden, was perhaps best unearthed in the national immigration and emigration statistics.

In 1976, for the first time, Rhodesia suffered a net loss of over 7,000 whites. This total would grow through 1977 to almost 11,000. Notwithstanding the effect of this on commerce and industry, its more critical impact was felt in the military. “Regrettably”, Ian Smith wrote in his 1997 autobiography, “there were signs that our white community, for the first time, was beginning to have doubts about our future.”

Doubts indeed. By mid-1978, enough white families were opting for the ‘chicken run’, or the ‘yellow route’ as it was also sometimes known, that the country was losing the equivalent of one company of territorial troops a month. ‘Gapping it’ was becoming an option for white, suburban, middle-class Rhodesians who had never traded in their British, Italian, Greek or South African passports. Apart from the handful of whites who could call themselves fully indigenised, those who were not leaving were those who could not. The gathering tide of exodus even included plans by the military for a possible evacuation. In mid-1978, Lieutenant-Colonel Garth Barrett took over as SAS commander and was told that in the event of a catastrophe, for example, an unconditional handover to Robert

Mugabe, plans were in place to airlift the personnel and families of both the SAS and the Selous Scouts to South Africa.

Minister of Defence Reginald Cowper, who in 1976 had raised the age limit for military service from thirty to thirty-four, set the tone for the new year by raising the age limit again, this time legislating that all fit men, Asian, white and coloured, up to the age of fifty were liable for call-up. In September, Phase One National Service, affecting mainly school leavers, was extended from one year to eighteen months. As a gesture of compensation, the territorial reserve commitment was reduced from 190 to 120 days a year.

Ian Smith, in the meanwhile, sought the comfort of his worst and only friend. At a meeting with John Vorster in Cape Town he revealed his intention to work with the moderate black leadership in the hope of reaching an internal settlement. Vorster was sympathetic, or at least appeared to be, but restated his preference for an Anglo-American solution. When he told Smith that he had been working behind the scenes with the British and Americans to try and get the Pretoria agreement back on track, Smith's heart sank. Vorster's main hope now lay in the new British Foreign Secretary, David Owen, who had taken over the office on the death of Anthony Crosland. Vorster spoke warmly of the new man as an improvement on the old, but to Smith that was probably not saying a great deal. A reliable and trustworthy officer of the British Government was a creature so rare that Smith and his Cabinet would need to see one to believe it.

Thus, with another unsatisfying encounter under his belt, Smith returned to Salisbury and immediately began to look around for likely partners to include in an internal settlement. Bishop Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole both loomed large as non-aligned freelancers looking for a new home, and to flesh out their possible contribution, Smith identified a handful of chiefs with both moral ballast and influence. Before he had progressed too far, however, the new and improved British Foreign Secretary flew into Cape Town to familiarise himself with the neighbourhood. Smith was duly invited to Groote Schuur to assess David Owen's merits for himself.

At thirty-eight, Owen was the youngest Foreign Secretary since Anthony Eden. Youthful, dynamic and pedigreed, he was an alumnus of Sidney Sussex College, a medical doctor, a Fabian and a scion of the upper-

middle class establishment. His ministerial position had not been achieved through any particular track record, and so had much to prove. He was, therefore, anxious to stamp his particular mark onto the Rhodesian crisis.

Naturally, Smith arrived in Cape Town predisposed to dislike him, and he was not disappointed. In his own words, Smith found Owen "one of these petty little men trying to fill a job which is too big for him".

'Petty little man' was probably unfair, but yes indeed, Owen was trying to fill a job too big for him. It was not just at that preliminary meeting, but throughout his involvement in the Rhodesian drama that Owen revealed a very patchy understanding of the history of the affair, and no real grasp of the racial and interracial nuances at play. It did not take Smith very long to establish this, and moreover, he found Owen evasive, vague and somewhat less than his own man. In fact, by his own admission, he was nothing more than the vanguard of another Anglo-American initiative and could do nothing without American approval.

Once again, Ian Smith flew home with a lot to think about. A few days later, Owen caught up with him in Salisbury, bringing with him his own jerry cans of petrol to avoid breaking British sanctions. His meeting with Smith achieved nothing other than to enrage white Rhodesians with such verities as publicly describing nationalist 'terrorists' as "essentially men of good will driven to take up arms". Although he rejected the Patriotic Front's claim to being the only legitimate voice of the revolution, he was equally adamant that neither Nkomo nor Mugabe could realistically be excluded from any internal settlement.

Owen, indeed, was not the only player in the Anglo-American team apparently running in the wrong direction. US Vice President Walter Mondale held a meeting with John Vorster in Vienna in May 1977, the object of which was to confirm American interest in Africa in the wake of Henry Kissinger. Mondale immediately broadsided Vorster with the contention that South African race policy was no less repellent to the world than Rhodesia's. He then tried to browbeat the South African Prime Minister into dictating to Smith some vague settlement that the American seemed to be inventing on the spot.

Vorster was both offended and unnerved. Mondale's arrogance and his obvious ignorance were fairly reflective of the Carter administration's overall African policy. While Kissinger had been pursuing a global political strategy, Carter's policy was simplistic and aimed above all at the African-

American vote. As Carter's black ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, observed, the hand that picked the cotton picked the president. With all this wisdom ringing in his ears, Vorster flew home from Vienna a little less sure of himself, and far more favourably disposed towards Smith than at any time hitherto.

In the meanwhile, Andrew Young was nominated to be David Owen's partner in the Anglo-American initiative. Young represented an odd but potentially excellent choice of envoy to serve as African peacemaker. Although hampered by poor timing and circumstances, he was noticeably less inclined than many of his black countrymen to view the African situation as simply 'black man good, white man bad'. As a pedigreed civil rights activist, he was at one-time an ally and friend of Martin Luther King. Educated in a segregated school system, he understood racism, and later became a student of both King and Gandhi, adopting non-violence as his political mantra.

It was unfortunate, however, that he appeared to be deliberately paired with the British Foreign Secretary for reasons no sounder than their obvious race symbolism. In due course, however, like Owen, he began to see his mandate, for want of anything else, as primarily a vehicle for personal advancement. The terrible twins, as they became known in local diplomatic circles, would suffer throughout their mission the consequences of Walter Mondale's thoughtless comments to John Vorster. Vorster, on both his own and Smith's behalf, was now inclined to lie low and let the nasty liberal rash in Washington cure itself in the usual way. At that time, in any case, he was beginning to suffer ill health, and it was becoming apparent that his hard-line Defence Minister P.W. Botha was influencing most of his major decisions. This, of course, was good news for Rhodesia. Then, on 20 September 1978, Vorster resigned in favour of Botha, which tended to position the body politic of South Africa even more in support of Rhodesian survival.

Thus, more or less free of South African pressure, Smith had no interest in discussing an external settlement with anyone. He had at last seen an opportunity to sprint for the touchline with the over-inflated bladder that he was calling an 'Internal Settlement', and while sceptics and observers predicted that the ball would rupture long before it fell to earth, Smith nonetheless lunged for the gap, and proceeded to run for his very life.

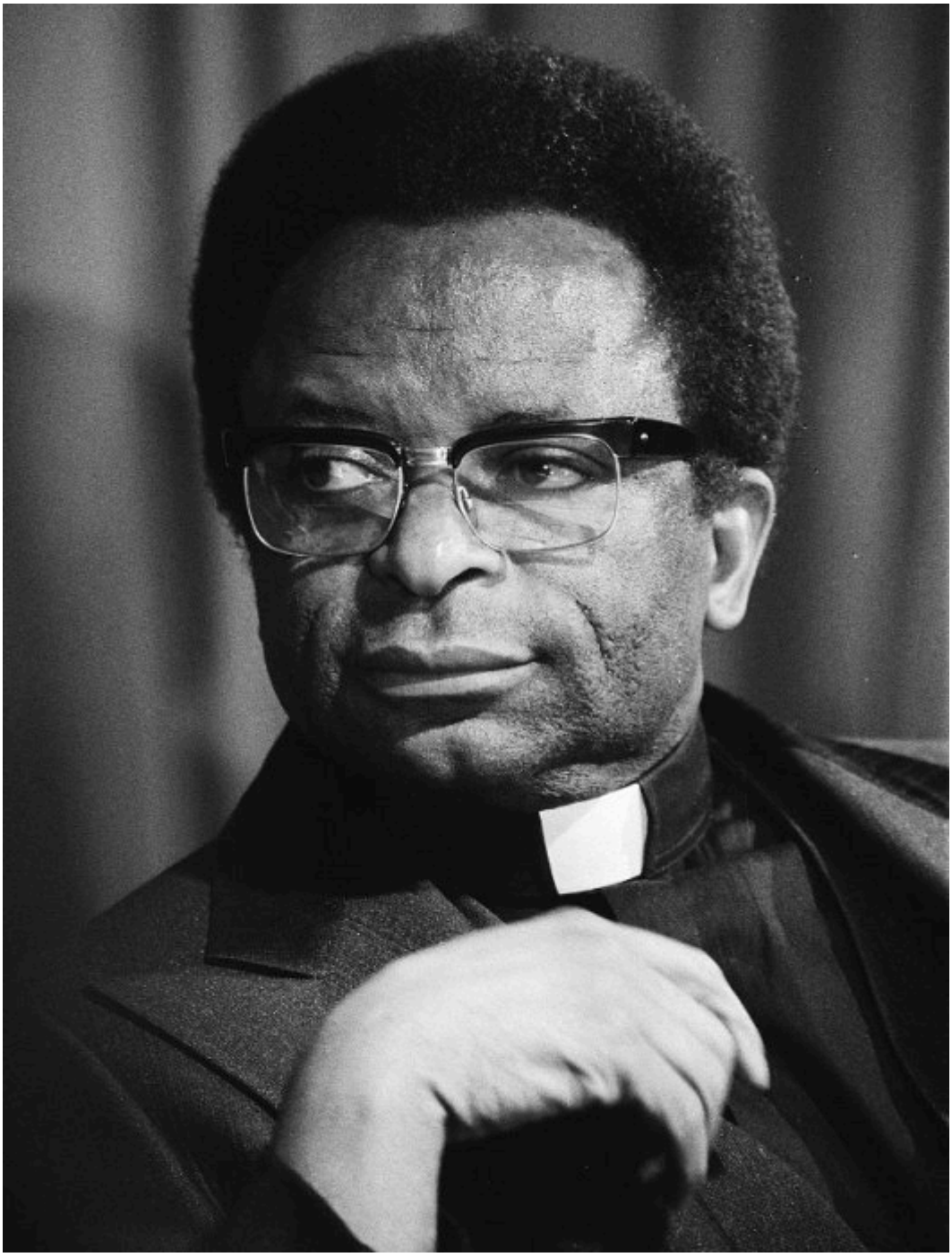
It is important to note here that most, if not all leading and senior members of the Rhodesian security structure were sceptical about the outcome of the war. Combined Operations met on 20 July 1977 to discuss the Intelligence Coordinating Committee's assessment of the threat to Rhodesia for the quarter 1 July to 30 September 1977. All branches of the Security Forces were represented, and fact sheets handed out to each man made depressing reading. Rhodesia's actual physical survival was hanging by a thread. Ongoing Security Force successes on the battlefield were not keeping up with guerrilla deployments, and certainly not making any significant impression on the external threat. ZANLA was accelerating attacks in critical operational areas while ZIPRA continued to develop its conventional capacity. It was predicted that by the end of the quarter, the number of guerrillas operating in Rhodesia would outnumber the Security Forces.

Also, as a consequence of the white exodus, the internal security system was beginning to buckle. The Security Forces could not all at once conduct the war, protect civilian life and property and monitor vital rail and road communications. Large areas of the country, particularly along the border with Mozambique, were under effective guerrilla control, and as Herbert Chitepo once predicted, Security Forces simply did not have the manpower to garrison the entire country.

This was all made known to Smith and the Cabinet in a top-secret memorandum dated 20 July 1977. The document, signed by all the heads of services who attended the meeting, was entitled *Military and Police Implications of the Quarterly Threat, 1 July 1977 to 30 September 1977*. In it the service chiefs stressed the need to expand the Protected Village programme to limit local support to the guerrillas, warning that if the current levels of guerrilla deployments continued, along with the ongoing haemorrhage of white manpower, the war would in due course become conventional. The fundamental conclusion, however, delivered in clear and unambiguous terms was that a purely military solution to the crisis no longer existed. Although not stated explicitly, the document also underscored the ComOps view that an internal settlement that excluded the main warring parties would be a waste of time, and at that point time was of the essence.

Although Smith glanced at the document, he put it to one side and continued on precisely the course that he had set for himself. The

government information services supported him with ongoing propaganda that Rhodesia was winning the war without difficulty, which was a vital reassurance if white Rhodesians were going to continue giving total commitment to it. In later years, many would question the ethics of the various service chiefs, who after that filed the memorandum away, said and did nothing and went on pretending that it was a jolly good war. Had the general public been made aware of the fact that their security commanders were wont to give up the fight at that point, another two years of bloodshed might have been avoided. These were the most ferocious years of the war, during which thousands lost their lives. A military coup was obviously out of the question, but a staged leak or even an explicit statement might have saved the reputations of otherwise loyal men.



Bishop Abel Muzorewa

18
Internal Settlement

David Owen in drag – **Rhodesia Herald** describing Margaret Thatcher

Smith's new squad was a C-team of political desperados with nothing to lose and everything to gain by signing up. Ndabaningi Sithole was visited in Malawi by a senior CIO representative who invited him to take part in internal negotiations, on the condition that he restate his denunciation of violence. Without wasting a moment, Sithole put a telephone call through to the *Rhodesia Herald* and stated for the record that he was opposed to terrorism, this just hours after a rejection of his his latest plea to the OAU for money and arms.

After a decade in the political wilderness Sithole was inclined to grasp at any straw that came to hand. Smith offered him perhaps his last opportunity to lift the premiership of an independent Zimbabwe right out from under the noses of his opponents. He arrived at Salisbury Airport on 10 July 1977 to a disappointing reception and, with no point in making a speech on the tarmac, he was hurried on to an equally bleak rally staged in Highfield. In truth, it did not matter. Smith's choreography did not include Sithole taking anything from anyone. He had written Bishop Abel Muzorewa into the part of the first black prime minister, with Sithole and a handful of chiefs tossed in to flesh out the chorus.

Muzorewa was the next to receive an invitation to join the ensemble, and, of him, Smith's opinion is clearly written in his memoirs. To paraphrase: a black leader is incapable of acting without constant reference to the views of his followers. In the case of a strong leader, this complies with accepted democratic principles but, where a weak leader is concerned, it smacks of appeasement. This sort of behaviour would in short order turn a leader into a follower, which was precisely what Smith had in mind.

This then was the blueprint for an internal settlement. The dynamics are easy to divine, and the absence of the Patriotic Front makes the overall motivation fairly obvious. Such baby steps, however, were hard to make, and caused terrible pain in the caucus. Before Smith could get to work, another rebellion broke out on the backbenches that threatened to derail the process even before it had begun.

An evergreen voice of discontent in the Rhodesian Front was its past chairman, Des Frost. On this occasion, Frost teamed up with two prominent local farmers to form a new party called the Rhodesian Action Party. Nine RF members defected to the RAP. This was the long-expected white backlash. The engine of the protest was a large body of Afrikaner dissenters who were absolutely irreconciled to any talk of black majority rule. It was the most severe challenge to Smith to date, and, in response he called a general election. On 31 August, Smith once again fought the good fight and won. The RF swept all fifty-five white seats, giving Smith the fresh mandate he needed, and effectively a free hand to reinvent the future.

Soon afterwards, Smith received a brief and unexpected visit from the new South African Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha. Botha was on his way to London to meet David Owen and Cyrus Vance. Pik Botha was a straight-talking man and his approach to Smith was with none of the forbearances of his predecessors. Fixing the Rhodesian Prime minister with his steel blue eyes, he warned him that time to find a peaceful solution to the Rhodesian crisis had run out. Whatever else Smith thought or hoped would come from the South Africans, Botha made it clear that in his opinion there would now have to be losers, and Smith correctly took this to mean that one of those losers would be himself.

Just as Pik Botha was flying out of Salisbury, the Anglo-American team of Owen and Young was flying in. This was their first substantive visit to the country and, to an already irritated Ian Smith, they presented a dossier of suggestions for a solution to his problem. As might have been expected, Smith found the new proposal the work of enthusiastic amateurs and had difficulty taking any of it seriously. Despite lengthy diplomatic procedures between Washington, London and various African capitals, all that Owen and Young had achieved in their desire to please everybody was to please no-one. Smith, with so much else on his plate, once again had to sit and listen to the old parrot cry of one-man-one-vote.

Freshly packaged and stamped with a new label, the new Anglo-American proposal read much like the old. It was a variation of the usual constitutional manipulations to get blacks in and whites out, without appearing to take away or give anything to anybody. Ultimately, none of it made any difference. It was in proposals for the transition – the return to legality – that the Anglo-American team revealed the extent to which it had not been paying attention. The difference between Kissinger's diplomacy

and this was a fundamental failure to recognise that without South Africa, Rhodesia could be forced to do nothing. Hell could freeze over before Ian Smith would hand over the policing of a transitional government and a ceasefire to the 'liberation forces'. This, of course, was the fundamental premise of the Owen-Young proposals, and one wonders why they bothered.

The 'liberation forces' clause was in the document because Mugabe would have it no other way, knowing full well that Smith would never accept it. As Smith was trying to forge an internal alliance, Mugabe's strategy remained total war, and neither man had any time for the work of a pair of amateurs. Smith handed the proposals over to his legal experts for formal consideration, and promptly forgot about them. The co-leaders of the Patriotic Front, the meanwhile, released a document asking: "By what faith can an election booth be regarded as democratic, free and impartial if it is surrounded at its four corners by Smith's policemen, his soldiers, his district commissioner and his judges?" And for all intents and purposes that seemed to be the end of it.

Still wanting nothing more than to get on with the job of building his internal alliance, Smith was again distracted, this time by an intriguing invitation delivered discreetly through the offices of Tiny Rowland, to meet Kenneth Kaunda for talks in Lusaka. Clad in caution, and with great haste and secrecy, Smith and P.K. van der Byl left Salisbury and flew to the Zambian capital, where they were met at the airport by a gushing Kaunda. Kaunda's objective was to present himself as an honest broker between the Rhodesians and the nationalists and in particular the faction loyal to Joshua Nkomo. Kaunda believed that Nkomo had emerged from the trials of the past few years a renewed and sanitised revolutionary, with a desire to negotiate and reach a pragmatic solution. Closer to the truth perhaps was that he, like Muzorewa and Sithole, sensed the danger of being eclipsed by Mugabe, and if a shortcut to power could be found, Nkomo would be happy to take it.

From the Rhodesian standpoint, this was welcome news. What had so far beggared the internal settlement was the fact that legitimacy would be impossible to claim if strong leadership for the transition could not be found. If everything that was being said were true, Nkomo would undoubtedly bring an element of authenticity to the negotiations that neither Sithole nor Muzorewa was really capable of. On the chances of such an

alliance succeeding, Smith was given contradictory intelligence. The CIO opined, against Smith's better judgement, that no settlement of any sort would work without Mugabe. Furthermore, throwing a dominant Nkomo into a race with Sithole and Muzorewa was likely to provoke an implosion. Also, the fact that Mugabe controlled more than half the liberation forces guaranteed at the very least that such an arrangement, although it might alter the balance, would not stop the war.

Nonetheless, Smith was very keen to explore the idea further, and then perhaps meet with Nkomo. However, news soon leaked, and the first to hear it was Nyerere, who duly passed the information on to Mugabe. Both men were furious, Mugabe, both because Kaunda had presumed to speak on behalf of the Patriotic Front and because Nkomo was manoeuvring behind his back, and Nyerere because Kaunda had approached Smith outside of the Frontline alliance. It was not long before Muzorewa and Sithole were also alerted, which immediately triggered the expected histrionics. The first thought to strike each man was that if Nkomo came on board, neither would have any real chance of leading the alliance to the presidency.

Like everybody else, Nkomo lived with a healthy terror of Mugabe. The moment he was directly confronted by the ZANU leader, he retreated and denied any suggestion of infidelity. The only lesson that Smith and P.K. van der Byl found worth taking home was that Kaunda was by then so desperate to bring an end to the war that he would do almost anything. Thus, on 24 of November 1977, Smith made a formal announcement that he had invited three 'internal' black leaders – Muzorewa, Sithole and Chief Jeremiah Chirau – to the conference table. The moment was profoundly significant, even if a strong taint of compromise hung about it.

A day before Smith's announcement, on the morning of 23 November, Operation *Dingo* began. SAS paratroopers and a strike force of heliborne RLI commandos attacked the main ZANLA headquarters outside Chimoio, some forty miles east of the Rhodesian border. Chimoio was by far the most important ZANLA facility in Mozambique, accommodating, according to Rhodesian intelligence estimates, between 9,000 and 11,000 enemy. A second and smaller base at Tembue, situated some 150 miles further north, was also hit. An accurate body count of casualties, in the end, proved impossible, although the figure was generally agreed to be very high. By the time the Tembue Raid began, guerrillas stationed there had

already heard about Chimoio and had mostly fled the scene. A round figure of 1,200 kills, announced in a Security Forces communiqué, was admitted to be only an estimate, but it was probably a reasonably accurate one.

Again, for ZANU, the propaganda value of this attack, zealously disseminated worldwide, was colossal, certainly outweighing the human cost in terms of its long-term significance. The *Zimbabwe News*, ZANU's in-house newspaper, had this to say about the raid:

"The racist enemy forces of Ian Smith supported by those of Johannes Vorster, the Racist Prime Minister of South Africa, attacked two of our transit camps where our people have been engaged in serious self-reliance projects like agriculture, poultry, piggery, health and crafts…the enemy also destroyed farming equipment such as harrows, planters and tractors."

By then, only the most committed dellusionists took this sort of thing seriously. The report, in the meanwhile, went on to implicate French, South African, Israeli, British and West German forces in the attack. The British, for their part, found it difficult to disguise their admiration for the attacking forces. With traditional Anglo-Saxon support for the underdog, David Owen could not help himself but remark: "…it might show the Patriotic Front that the Rhodesian Defence Force is not on its back." Mugabe was affronted by this comment, but not unduly concerned. He knew that Owen was wrong. The Security Force, like the rest of the white establishment in Rhodesia, was indeed on its back, but he was shrewd also enough to acknowledge that, in the wake of the most recent raids, the dying Rhodesian donkey still had a few savage kicks left in it.

19
A New Chapter

We are seeking safeguards which will ensure that a future Government will not be able to abuse its power by resorting to actions which are dishonest or immoral – **Ian Smith**, New Year message to the nation on 31 December 1977

The participants in Ian Smith's Internal Settlement were Bishop Abel Muzorewa, ANC Vice President Doctor Elliot Gabellah, James Chikerema, Ndabaningi Sithole and two local chiefs, Jeremiah Chirau and Kayisa Ndweni. Sithole and Muzorewa were the principal players and, in them, Smith had the raw materials he needed to play one off against another. Both coveted the premiership, each was consumed with suspicion for the other, and each was prepared to out-compromise everybody else to achieve power.

Elliot Gabellah, apart from his vice-presidency of the ANC, was a local businessman and black MP who had no chance of winning. The same was true of the two chiefs, of whom Jeremiah Chirau represented traditional maShona opinion and Kayisa Ndweni amaNdebele. Chief Chirau was a venerable and grandfatherly soul who lacked any real passion for victory, and Ndweni lacked any broad-based appeal. James Chikerema tagged along but played no meaningful role in the process except possibly as a spoiler when it was all wrapped up.

Between Muzorewa and Sithole, Smith stood a good chance of negotiating a fair constitution. Of course 'fair' in this context meant giving the moderates the trappings of power while keeping the instruments of state under white control. Nothing could be fairer than that. Whether he hoped this would silence the extremists or satisfy the world community, it is hard to say, but at the very least it would change the complexion of the war from a race struggle to a civil war.

Sithole, in the meanwhile, kept the name ZANU, unexpectedly attracting many of the disaffected elements of the UANC, in particular, those among the amaNdebele. This gave him a rather brief and dangerous boost in confidence that prompted him to contact Kaunda and probe the possibility of engineering Mugabe's eviction from the Patriotic Front. If this happened, Sithole would presumably be able to jump into the ZANU seat and lead the party and the alliance to victory. Kaunda would have been

delighted to comply, but his fingers had already been burned, besides which, as Samora Machel's man, Robert Mugabe lay effectively beyond his reach.

After that, both Sithole and Muzorewa slipped compliantly into character. They took to the stage, making tough statements over irrelevant issues while the crucial matters were slipped past the black public with a minimum of debate. It was Rhodesian Front demands that tended to define the essentials of the new constitution, and principal among these was that whites would elect one-third of the existing parliamentary seats, with the power to block any changes in the constitution. Moreover, whites would remain in control of the police and the army, civil servants would enjoy career and pension guarantees, and a bill of rights would generally protect white interests. Whites would moreover dominate the judiciary, and retain the right to dual citizenship.

While all this positive work was underway, Smith received another unwanted communication from the British Foreign Office. This time it was an invitation to attend an all-party conference to be held in Malta in late January. David Owen and Andrew Young had been watching from the sidelines and felt it necessary now to try and find a way to include Nkomo and Mugabe in the deal. Smith felt under no pressure to attend, so he did not. The invitation was also extended to Mugabe and Nkomo as joint leaders of the Patriotic Front, and although Nkomo was as happy as ever to be seen on the world stage, the invitation was as inconvenient for Mugabe as it was for Smith.

Despite so far losing every battle, Mugabe was still clearly winning the war. With perfect clarity, he could sense the moment that Smith would be brought to his knees. The weakness in his position was the Frontline States and, if South Africa had temporarily climbed off Smith's back, Nyerere and Kaunda were still riding heavily on his. If they deemed it was appropriate for him to explore every avenue for a peaceful settlement, then he had no choice but to appear to be in compliance. It was of concern to him, it must be said, that in the event of an internal settlement, Britain might very well lead the way in recognising a puppet government, which would, in turn, result in the lifting of sanctions, and probably the end of the war. There was also the fact that that he had for the second time only narrowly survived a military coup.

Rebellion in the guerrilla camps was never far from the surface. Although Mugabe was, without doubt, committed to the war, he was less than committed to the warriors. Investigations following the attacks on Chimoio and Tembue revealed indifferent defences and very poor, if any, emergency procedures in camp. This not only prompted considerable private criticism of Mugabe, but it also stoked ongoing discontent in the ranks. Ever the political tactician, however, Mugabe took the opportunity to conduct a general purge of his party structures, and he was in the midst of this when he was summoned to Malta to meet the Anglo-American team.

The quality of Mugabe's political apprenticeship would be tested in the months to follow, for Malta was just part of a complex dependency on international goodwill that he could not afford to neglect. If he had to humour the professional egos of a couple of political novices, it would seem a small price to pay to keep the Americans and British on his side. As he expected, though, the affair was a charade. Without Smith, Muzorewa or Sithole on board, no real progress was possible, and all parties simply went through the motions. To sustain the Owen-Young effort, however, Mugabe agreed that a United Nations peacekeeping force *might* have a role to play. This he balanced, however, by insisting that his army would play the dominant role in any transitional arrangement. "The trouble with Mugabe", Andrew Young later admitted, "is that when you've got a Jesuit education mixed with a Marxist ideology, you've got a hell of a guy to deal with."

Back in Salisbury, Smith was not without challenges of his own. His claim to intimately understanding the mind of a black man was under stress, and most of his time lately seemed to be spent putting out fires, mollifying egos and promising everything to everybody. He was also not immune to the fact that his negotiating partners were playing to a broad audience of blacks who were looking to them for signs of genuine progress. Obviously, Muzorewa and Sithole were the main players, but pandering to them tended to create pressures elsewhere in the alliance, and it was only with considerable forbearance and skill that Smith managed to keep the coalition together.

Muzorewa had a tendency to fudge, sulk and obfuscate, but he was perhaps the easiest of the four to deal with. What little genuine resistance Smith did encounter came from Ndabaningi Sithole, who was at least not an absolute novice. He was the author of the benchmark work 'African Nationalism' and shared his genuine political pedigree only with James

Chikerema. Nevertheless, Sithole was worn out physically and emotionally, and in the end, he conceded far more than he should have. In fact, in the end, both he and Muzorewa let almost everything of value slip through their fingers.

A few days before the internal accord was brought into being, the OAU Council of Ministers spoke on behalf of the Afro-Asian bloc, rejecting and condemning the process as aimed at perpetuating white minority domination in Rhodesia. Nonetheless, on the morning of Friday 3 March 1978, the parties to the internal settlement gathered at the Governor's Lodge in Salisbury and prepared to sign the accord into being. Amid a flurry of excitement and press cameras, Muzorewa mingled in the sunshine, clearly happier in the glare of political celebrity than buried in the trenches of bare-knuckle diplomacy. He went around singing enthusiastically: "I am in the mood for signing!"

He then rummaged in a carrier bag and produced what Ian Smith described as "one of those colourful embroidered fancy dress costumes which he had gathered in one of those countries to our north". In this dramatic, but hardly authentic outfit, Muzorewa enthusiastically approached the business at hand. After the five copies of the agreement were signed, Smith was somewhat taken aback when the Bishop, couture in his 'fancy dress', publicly praised the Rhodesian Prime Minister for his forbearance during a difficult period. Smith later admitted that a tart rejoinder had hovered perilously close to his lips, but as in a rugby game, he conceded, one tackles one's best friend with the same zest as any, and he let the moment pass with a smile.

20
The Killing Goes On: The Elim Mission Massacre

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight – **Bishop Abel Muzorewa**

Thus the unwieldy 'Transitional Government' came into being. Each ministry thereafter fielded a black and white co-minister, an arrangement which had both a symbolic and a practical purpose. Obviously, it struck the right racial balance, but it also served to ensure that black politicians worked under white guidance before they could assume full office. Under the terms of the agreement, it was envisaged that a general election, under the rules of universal adult suffrage, would take place at the end of the year. In the meanwhile, the critical short-term objective of the Transitional Government was to gain international recognition. While Smith stayed behind in Rhodesia to manage affairs, all the other signatories departed in their various directions to sell the merits of the internal settlement abroad. Smith's job was too delicate to abandon, for proof of success would come only if the settlement succeeded in ending the war.

To this end, an intense propaganda campaign was rolled out and, under the terms of a tentative ceasefire and a general amnesty, guerrillas were encouraged to come out of the bush, disarm and pledge their allegiance to an internal party. A parallel effort was made to encourage whites to at last reconcile with their black neighbours. A three and a half minute advertisement appeared on the nation's television screens depicting many areas of existing racial co-operation such as in the military, in hospitals, in the Internal Affairs Department and with children at play. Scenes of interracial openness were filmed in soft focus, and played to the words and music of South African recording artist Neville Nash's composition 'Harmony'.

Apart from being a boon to Neville Nash, and one or two local advertising agencies, the campaign achieved very little. Neither did the Beverly Building Society's morning radio language clinic that tried, after nearly ninety years of colonisation, to teach the white Rhodesian public a new Shona or isiNdebele word each day. Both efforts wilted against a flame of ongoing violence as the relentless killing went on. Nightly news broadcasts on radio and television passed this information on to a

Rhodesian public growing daily more distraught. The anonymous reportage also counted out the deaths of blacks ‘caught in the crossfire’ or ‘running with guerrillas’. These became inconsequential when every night the Security Forces would regret to announce the death of Lance Corporal so-and-so of 4-Company Rhodesia Regiment, Corporal this of 1-RLI or Flight Lieutenant that of the Rhodesian Air Force. The list of Anglo Saxon youth falling in ones and twos, sometimes threes and fours, and occasionally more, began after a while to tear at the hearts of a wondering nation. Whites were alternately mollified and threatened by the likes of P.K. van der Byl, who expressed his bitter contempt for the ‘Yellow Routers’ with utterances such as:

“[I]f the cause our soldiers died for should be lost, then an intolerable and shameful burden of responsibility will rest on the shoulders of those who fled and [will] haunt them for all of their days.”

If many whites were groping for some justification to say honourably to themselves and to their friends ‘so far and no further’, then that moment came on 23 June 1978. That evening, guerrillas of disputed origin appeared at the Elim Pentecostal Mission in upper Vumba, some fifteen miles outside the border town of Umtali. Instructing the black students to pack up and leave, they isolated the British staff, consisting of three male and four female missionaries, plus four children, and escorted them at gunpoint onto the playing fields where they were summarily beaten and bayonetted to death. One woman, twenty-eight-year-old Mary Fisher, survived her beating and a variety of stab wounds before crawling into the bush where she was found the following morning by Security Force details. She died later at the Andrew Fleming Hospital in Salisbury.

The bodies were left as they were found so that the full horror was laid bare before the international press as it began to arrive. P.K. van der Byl personally accompanied a batch of journalists choppered in by the Ministry of Information, and the gruesome scenes soon afterwards appeared in newspapers around the world. The epilogue, of course, was nothing if not predictable. A war of words erupted as fingers were pointed and blame apportioned. The Conservatives in the House of Commons accused the Patriotic Front and castigated David Owen for supporting terrorism while Labour led the way in condemning the Selous Scouts. Mugabe, the Marxist Jesuit revolutionary, pleaded the utter impossibility of him or his followers perpetrating such gratuitous brutality. From the slough of conflicting voices,

he plucked an eyewitness who attested to the fact that the killers had not been bona fide ZANLA.

The guerrilla tendency to keep detailed notes on operations, however, either cleared the air or thickened the plot, depending on who was reading the evidence. Luke Madjuimbo, a ZANLA guerrilla, killed in a later operation, was found to be carrying a notebook with a passage that read: “We killed twelve whites including four babies, as a remembrance of Nyadzonia, Chimoio, Tembwe and in Zimbabwe massacres.”

The aftermath of the Elim Mission Massacre

21
The New Improved Foreign Secretary

Not at all, he's a very gentle man. In fact, one of the ironies of the whole struggle is that I can't imagine Joshua Nkomo, or Robert Mugabe, ever pulling the trigger on a gun to kill anyone – **Andrew Young**

If this was the state of play by the middle of 1978, then quite clearly, the guns were not about to be silenced. Britain and the world community would offer no recognition to the Internal Settlement, and there matters rested. An OAU Council of Ministers meeting was held in July, at which every encouragement was given to the Patriotic Front, and just in case there was any doubt, the United Nations passed a resolution declaring the internal settlement "illegal and unacceptable", and calling on all member states to withhold recognition. ZANLA was also quick to deal with any of its members who might be responsive to calls to surrender, eliminating or withdrawing any units deemed to be suspect.

While recognition was always going to be a long shot, Smith's internal accord did at least stir things up in the House of Commons. The opposition Conservative Party expressed sympathy towards the efforts of Smith and Muzorewa and considerable animosity towards the Patriotic Front. The same was true in the House of Lords. Although falling short of a call for actual recognition, Lord Peter Carrington, then leader of the opposition in the House of Lords, told the House:

"It must be said that there has been inadequate recognition of the remarkable achievement of the internal settlement and too much support for its opponents."

Carrington went on to suggest that if the Patriot Front was excluded from the process, it was because it had excluded itself. There should be no support for those promoting the use of arms over dialogue. Labour had the final say, however, and David Owen reiterated that an acceptable solution could not realistically exclude the Patriotic Front.

Later that month a high-powered team of Field Marshal Lord Carver, the proposed British resident commissioner, David Owen, Andrew Young and American Secretary of State Cyrus Vance visited Salisbury, arriving after a brief meeting with the two principal leaders of the Patriotic Front in Dar-es-Salaam. While Nyerere had previously assured Young that

Nkomo and Mugabe were willing to accept the broad terms of the Anglo-American proposals, on meeting Mugabe, the four found him as insistent as ever that the dominant role in any transitional arrangement would be played by his forces. By then in full dress rehearsal, Mugabe opened proceedings by demanding a complete renegotiation of the entire agreement.

With this to reflect on, the meetings that followed had a somewhat theatrical flavour. While Smith might have been tempted to say 'I told you so', he held his counsel. His personal account of the meeting, however, oozed hatred towards Owen, who pushed past several important white members of the Transitional Government to lavishly greet every black member present, including an office messenger. Cyrus Vance did better, sincerely complimenting Smith on the clean, well planned and well-run city that Salisbury appeared to be, in stark contrast, he added, to all the other African capitals that he had so far visited.

Smith found Andrew Young to be the only other genuine and committed member of the delegation, forgiving him such naiveties as confusing Mugabe's effeminate, over-cultivation for gentleness of nature. Young could be relied upon to be utterly honest, a trait Smith found singularly lacking in the politicians he had lately been forced to deal with. When Bishop Muzorewa and others of the Executive Council asked Young and Cyrus Vance how they assessed Mugabe's position, Young was candid in replying: "He is fighting for personal power." Such frankness, of course, had no place in the politics of the moment and, at Owen's request, Vance tactfully excluded Young from the press conference held after the meeting.

The first significant challenge to Muzorewa as head of the Executive Council arose when a sharp young black lawyer by the name of Byron Hove began to make his voice heard. Hove had been summoned by Muzorewa from his practice in London to fill the position of co-minister of Justice, Law and Order. He soon began challenging the establishment with a series of provocative statements.

> We must bring in a situation where the laws reflect the broad interests of all the people in this country. I am aware that in this country the Police Force has been used as an instrument to enforce the Rhodesian Front laws which it has done enthusiastically. This has to stop…the white community and all law enforcement agencies need to

adjust to a new situation. Blacks do not need to because they have always wanted fairness and justice.

While whites waited to see how Muzorewa would deal with this, Hove overnight became the one member of the Transitional Government with any credibility. Even if some question marks hung over the integrity of his comments, Muzorewa had a rare opportunity to publicly support a black dissenter. Instead, he paced the floor under a terrible weight of indecision and, under pressure from Hove's co-minister, Hillary Squires, a man of acknowledged anti-British feeling, and something of a right-winger, he eventually issued Hove with an ultimatum. It was demanded that Hove either retract his statements or face dismissal. Hove opted for dismissal and returned to London. Realising his error, Muzorewa hinted loudly that he might demand Hove's reinstatement, but he lacked the courage to do so, and by then it was too late anyway.

As the year progressed, and the war raged on, Smith was forced to admit that the Internal Settlement had failed. The effect on Muzorewa and Sithole of this was a widening of the rift between them, as both came to realise that if they were to compete effectively, they would need armies of their own. As for Smith, he again found himself thinking about Joshua Nkomo, sensing that Nomo's participation as the only possible catalyst to a general acceptance of the settlement. Although he kept this thought to himself, he gave Ken Flower and his deputy Derek Robinson the job of fixing a new round of contacts with the ZAPU leader. On Saturday 5 August, Robinson managed to contrive a meeting between himself and Nkomo in London, at which he proposed discussions between him, Kaunda and Smith. Nkomo was in agreement, and a meeting was duly scheduled, to convene in Zambia the following weekend. Smith boarded a top-secret flight from Salisbury to the Zambian capital where a lengthy closed-door session began at Government House.

Kaunda and Nigerian Foreign Ministry official Brigadier Joseph Garba co-arbitrated the talks. Nigeria stepped out of costume a little in agreeing to be part of this conference, but not a murmur was heard from the rest of the continent, not even from Mugabe. The outcome was what Smith termed a 'workable plan' to bring both Nkomo and Mugabe into the existing arrangement. For Smith, of course, the move was enormously risky, for, although Nkomo was in agreement, Mugabe's opinion remained

untested. Even if the ZANU leader came on board, a power struggle would be inevitable. It certainly appeared unlikely that either would cooperate with the other as a legitimate means of progress if their own ultimate victory were not somehow guaranteed. All this taxed Smith's mind heavily. Should he or shouldn't he? What was he to do?

It did not help much when a few hours delay in his departure gave Smith the opportunity to wander through the corridors of Government House, a place that he had known so well in his Federal days. He found the rooms unkempt, the paint peeling, dust on the pelmets and the pictures askew. How different it all was from the days when the white man had kept the lawns trimmed, the linen starched and the curtains clean. From a bathroom window he looked out over shantytowns that had grown up in all directions. There, but for the tenacity of a handful of brave white men would go Rhodesia.

A day or two later, as news leaked, a touch of harsh reality was injected into the proceedings. Plans for a follow-up meeting were cancelled as Nyerere blustered at his exclusion and Mugabe expressed concerns that Nkomo was getting ahead of himself. Smith might easily have shaken his head at the tedium of it all had he not been forced to deal with the histrionics at home. The Transitional Government almost collapsed at the news that Nkomo might soon arrive to lead it, and indeed, Smith himself was beginning to quail a little bit at the thought of what he might have done. By giving Nkomo encouragement, he had cracked open the lid of Pandora's box, and he could now think of a hundred reasons why he should promptly slam it shut again.

A few days later Mugabe and Nkomo met face to face for the first time in a long while. Mugabe, of course, had already been briefed by the Nigerians which spared Nkomo the discomfort of having to do so himself. He nonetheless had to offer some sort of explanation, and he began by pleading that if Smith was on the verge of surrender, then why not engage him? Why not indeed! Nkomo suffered that fearful finger being thrust in his face and the warning that if he should become one of Smith's puppets, he might expect to be treated accordingly. Those who could be termed puppets in the Transitional Government, incidentally, had never been left in any doubt what Mugabe thought of them. "Those African Stooges, Smith's four Yes-Men are nothing less than traitors, who stand condemned by the

suffering revolutionary masses of Zimbabwe. Their own children will spit on their graves."

Then, on 3 September 1978, a Russian Strela SAM 7 missile brought down an Air Rhodesia Vickers Viscount aircraft on a commercial flight. Shortly after an 18h00 take off from Kariba, the *Hunyani* took a direct hit on the heat exchanger-jet pipe assembly that knocked out both starboard engines. As the passengers, for the most part, maintained their composure, the pilot struggled to control the stricken aircraft long enough to bring it down in an open field in the Urungwe Tribal Trust Land. The Viscount plunged into the bush killing thirty-five of the fifty-three passengers aboard. Ten survivors were later murdered on the ground by a ZIPRA unit deployed in the vicinity to mop up survivors. Because this aircraft was overbooked, a second Viscount was lined up on the tarmac for takeoff, with General Peter Walls on board. Walls' departure on this flight had been reported in the national press, and it can be assumed, therefore, that Walls was the principal target.

Ken Flower detected in Ian Smith a mixed response to this tragedy. Firstly, he sensed a great release of tension, for Smith fundamentally did not want to grasp the nettle of engaging Joshua Nkomo, and this shocking incident now placed that beyond consideration, no matter what the potential political advantage. Other sources contradict this, and state that although the atrocity compromised the process for a while, it did not ultimately destroy it. Secondly, of course, Smith, in common with the outside world, reeled at the horror of the incident.

Smith then prepared himself to receive the condolences and to hear condemnation of Nkomo's savagery from the international community, but curiously, nothing of the sort happened. The silence that followed astonished white Rhodesia, and as its meaning became clear, a feeling of tremendous isolation and abandonment overcame the nation. More incomprehensibly still, Nkomo freely admitted in an interview with BBC that his party was responsible, although he denied involvement in the subsequent murders. When answering the question, he laughed nervously, claiming that the Viscount was a valid military target since the aircrew and most of the male passengers on board were territorial reservists who were themselves guilty of murder. The British Government said nothing at all, and Nkomo walked away from that infamous interview without a breath of censure.

In the white Commonwealth, and in Britain itself, there was much sympathy expressed for Rhodesia by the general public, but this did not alter the fact that governments, global Christian organisations and charitable bodies were noticeably reserved in their criticism of ZAPU. The ZAPU representative to the UN, Doctor Callistus Ndhlovu, contradicted his leader by admitting that ZIPRA had, in fact, killed the ten survivors, but he did not accept that this was murder. The UN meekly accepted his account of the affair, and not a word of reproach was heard. It was the Anglican Church in Rhodesia, which was by no means as militant as the Catholic, and definitely not as clearly aligned, that took the lead in exposing the shameful silence.

However, having recovered a little from the shock of it, the question of an appropriate response came under consideration. For some time there had been growing concern in ComOps at the build-up of ZIPRA conventional forces at various camps in Zambia, and this seemed like the appropriate moment to deal with them. In response, the CIO's Alan Brice and Chris Gough of the Selous Scouts conducted separate reconnaissance of a large ZIPRA training camp situated on a farm on the outskirts of Lusaka. Known as Westlands Farm, or Freedom Camp, the base was sited close to the Zambian capital and local Air Force and Army bases in the hope, no doubt, that the Rhodesians would be wary of attacking it. Before the *Hunyani* tragedy, this might have so, but things had now changed. On 19 October, four Rhodesian Canberra bombers, eight Hawker Hunter strike jets and four helicopter gunships launched an attack on Westlands Farm.

While the attack was underway, a Canberra bomber circled menacingly above Lusaka International Airport, instructing air traffic control to ensure that both civil and air force aircraft remain grounded for the duration of the raid. At the same time, a more conventional series of airborne attacks neutralised two additional camps, one at Mkushi, some ninety-miles northeast of Lusaka, and the other, known as CGT-2, about sixty miles east of Lusaka. The combined body count for all three operations was estimated to be over 1,600 ZIPRA guerrillas. Once again, the Rhodesian armed services proved that they were a force to be reckoned with, and hats were lifted in some strange quarters. The Zambia *Daily Mail* commented as follows:

"One striking aspect of the attack was that though the bombing was quite heavy, vehicles passing by were not affected, except that many motorists abandoned their cars and trucks along the main road."

The *Times of Zambia* later quoted a railway official who was equally impressed that rail traffic using the line adjacent to the ZIPRA camp was not disrupted. As satisfying as the whole episode was, however, it ultimately made no difference to the general direction of the war, and needless to say, Mugabe did not share the sense of quiet admiration expressed by the local press. “Confronted by the reality of an imminent downfall”, he raged in an address to the Tanzanian Association of Journalists, “Smith has turned into a sadistic killer who tortures, kills and massacres not to survive but because he can no longer survive.”

And thus, as the pot loudly condemned the kettle, the question of an approaching deadline for majority rule elections could not be ignored. To Smith and his partners in the Transitional Government, this once again put the issue of ending the war at the top of the agenda. Their biggest obstacle, of course, was Mugabe’s opposing agenda, defined in no uncertain terms by an ongoing determination to fight.

To Muzorewa and Sithole, of course, ending the war meant more than merely the achievement of peace, but a test that would illustrate the degree of support that each enjoyed within the guerrilla factions. If either man could gain credit for ending the war, then he would be as good as anointed. For white Rhodesia, on the other hand, the question was one of recognition. The ending of both international isolation and the economic sanctions remained the Holy Grail. For those determined to stick it out, a dramatic improvement on current circumstances was clearly vital to arrest the daily haemorrhage of white manpower.

When Rhodesian Minister of Information, Immigration and Tourism, Wickus de Kock, joined the ‘dismal jimmies’ and took his ‘precarious loyalty’ to South Africa, he did so staunchly defending his right to make a personal decision to reject majority rule. Although widely condemned, and given a very rough crossing by customs officials at Beit Bridge, his was a decision that many other men of principle were also beginning to contemplate. By June 1978, emigration figures indicated that in the first half of that year 6,493 Rhodesians packed up and left the country.

The list of white civilians killed was also growing. Farmers, technicians, foresters, hoteliers, traders, miners and ordinary citizens travelling between towns and cities were picked off with depressing frequency. By the beginning of 1978, armed convoys had begun escorting

residents of outlying areas to and from the towns. Soon, regular convoys were running between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls, Fort Victoria and Beitbridge and Kariba and Salisbury. Even journeys between Salisbury, Bulawayo and Umtali were carried out strictly in daylight hours, and usually with a small group of heavily armed friends. Each week every ComOps meeting reviewed gains by both guerrilla factions and intelligence reports of fresh incursions running into the hundreds. Of late, guerrilla groups that were able to negotiate the frontier had a good chance of proceeding to their destination unmolested. Large areas of the countryside had become no-go areas where heavily armed military convoys found themselves doing precisely what the Portuguese had done a decade earlier. Men were content to fire randomly into the bush and move out of kill zones as quickly as possible. In a progressively defeatist mood, Operations *Thrasher* and *Repulse* became known as *Thrashed* and *Repulsed*.

By 1978 guerrilla incursions were effectively penetrating every sector of the country. With ‘gooks’ now causing havoc in the towns and cities, an unprecedented security regime was implemented, including the mandatory searching of anyone entering public buildings. Despite this, a bomb blast in a Woolworths supermarket in Salisbury killed eleven people and injured seventy. On the evening of 7 September, Umtali experienced another mortar and rocket attack, and this time four people were injured. A few weeks later another forty-minute bombardment saw one hundred and fifty projectiles of various sorts landing in scattered locations throughout the municipal area. It was the loudest and most sustained attack against the city so far, despite which, a majority of citizens merely turned over and went back to sleep, so inured had they become to the nocturnal fireworks.

On 11 December 1978, however, a unit of six ZANLA combatants successfully penetrated the Salisbury industrial quarter and fired several RPG-7 rockets into the bulk fuel storage containers. This caused the nation to sit up once again and take notice. The rocket fire triggered a gargantuan explosion and an ensuing blaze that, over the course of a week, consumed several months supply of precious fuel. Police officers attached to the Special Branch close security section assigned to protect Ian Smith were heard to remark that they had never seen the Prime Minister looking so haggard.

Because Manicaland lay along the Mozambique border, it was arguably the ‘hottest’ area of the country. By early 1979, the tea estates of

the Honde Valley had ceased production, and white personnel concerned themselves with little more than socialising, getting the kids to and from boarding school and keeping themselves alive. The untended tea bushes grew unruly, and the factories shut down. Briefly, a system of forced labour came into being as the Rhodesian African Rifles compelled locals to work at gunpoint so that the guerrillas could see that they were not doing so willingly. The killings went on, however, and protected villages provided no protection at all. Whites were attacked in their homes, on the roads and periodically projected skyward by a landmine blast. Comrades Kid Bazooka, Roy Rogers and Coconut Jongwe were just a few of the guerrilla leaders enjoying almost absolute local hegemony. A large dog baboon that nightly surveyed his empire from atop a volcanic plug in the valley was the only worthwhile target the army could find. Every evening a barrage of rifle fire would meet the old gentleman as he took his seat across the valley from Operations HQ. Maybe the various marksmen were not trying particularly hard since intelligence reports later suggested that he survived the war.

It was perhaps the forestry industry in Manicaland that suffered the most. Forestry also most acutely defined the gradual crippling of the Rhodesian economy, and the gallant but utterly hopeless efforts of many to keep it alive. Estates that cloaked thousands of hectares of hill and mountainside along the frontier provided an unassailable sanctuary for insurgents. Isolated industrial sawmills and factories were heavily fortified, as were the even more isolated homesteads. Ambushes on lonely estate roads and homestead attacks claimed the lives of a disproportionate number of whites in forestry communities. The ease with which a box of matches could destroy vast plantations of trees also rendered the Eastern Highlands the most lucrative quadrant for guerrilla activity. Social occasions at the various country clubs were characterised by a variety of heavily armoured private vehicles in the car parks, outdoor playgrounds that were off-limits to children and custom-built gun racks in the bar that were stacked high each evening with personal weapons. The most frequent gatherings of friends and neighbours in these isolated communities took place at the wakes and funerals of others.

The Melsetter district was probably the hardest hit of all. Eight employees died violently on the Charter Estates alone, while twenty-six white civilians in the area were killed in one way or another. Whites, of course, suffered and died more visibly than the blacks, but many blacks

were also menaced and killed. Their deaths would usually be more brutal to serve as a salutary warning to those working for white managers and white-owned estates. The public decapitation of a black husband and wife took place on one particular estate because the couple's daughter had married a policeman. Throughout the region, beerhalls were attacked and robbed, labour compounds terrorised, people abducted, terrorised and killed and rural buses regularly ambushed or blown to pieces by landmines. Blacks living this nightmare had a singular disadvantage, for under no circumstances would the authorities allow them to bear arms. Their isolated dwellings of mud and thatch or geometric rows of tin Nissan huts in fenced-off labour compounds offered absolutely no protection at all.

The predicament that the residents of the border areas of Manicaland found themselves in was, of course, reflected in many similar variations throughout the country. For example, in the southeast, where individual blocks of ranch land could run to hundreds of thousands of acres, the picturesquely sited homesteads rendered isolated pockets of white life desperately vulnerable. It was here that a now elderly Garfield Todd was still hanging in and still fighting the good fight. In December 1978, he wrote a letter to the *Rhodesia Herald* that the newspaper declined to carry, but was published elsewhere, and reflected the gut feelings of many others. The old man wrote:

"This is the saddest and most frightening Christmas Rhodesia has ever known." About this, there could be no doubt. The courage of the many who held out in these communities was matched by the many more who did not. No less courageously, many succumbed to pragmatism and abandoned their landholdings either for the cities or the yellow route.

22
Operation Favour
DC Max is the boss – **Rhodesia Herald**

The many warnings offered to Smith that his Internal Settlement partners carried no weight against the leaders of the armed factions began inevitably to ring true. So far only a handful of guerrilla fighters had surrendered, and if not remedied soon, this situation would undermine the nationalist bona fides of both Muzorewa and Sithole. It was perceived that many combatants wanted to come in, but were waiting for some sign that a significant number of their comrades were doing the same, and in this regard, both Muzorewa and Sithole approached General Walls for assistance. Walls issued a directive to Lieutenant Colonel Ron Reid Daly and Chief Superintendent Mac McGuinness of Special Branch Selous Scouts to concoct a scheme that would give the impression that large numbers of guerrillas were indeed surrendering. The plan was dubbed Operation *Favour*.[11]

In essence, the project required Selous Scout pseudo operatives posing as fighters to come in from the bush to receive training at specific receiving and holding centres. A gale of publicity would reach the ears of genuine guerrillas in the countryside who, it was hoped, would respond by flocking in to hand in their weapons and themselves. The Selous Scouts Special Branch initially acquired two farms for use as holding centres. The first was in the Plumtree area and the second in the Mudziwa area near Bindura. Later, another two farms near Beit Bridge and Enkledoorn were acquired specifically to house and retrain Sithole faction supporters. The areas around the farms were ‘frozen’ or insulated from orthodox military activity. They were termed ‘free zones’ to give the impression that those housed there were ‘liberated’ ZANLA or ZIPRA forces who had been retrained and redeployed.

In due course, pseudo call-signs began to arrive and take up residence. They were then trained by Selous Scouts instructors to be ‘guerrillas’. Muzorewa and Sithole were charged with gathering their armed supporters and channelling them to the various holding centres. Since neither had any particular core of armed support, both sought to flesh out the numbers with urban rowdies who were promised food and pay and the

seductive drawcard of weapons and training. In April 1978, 100 political detainees were released from Wha Wha and Chikurubi maximum-security prisons and added to the swelling rabble of bogus returnees. Upon the completion of their training, this third force of unaligned gunmen became Security Force Auxiliaries and were deployed into the countryside to represent the armed wings of Sithole's ZANU and Muzorewa's UANC.

The real ZANLA, of course, did what it could to expose the ruse. A group of ZANLA guerrillas waylaid two auxiliaries in the Wedza TTL when they strayed from their group in search of alcohol and women. The two were 'turned' and sent back to call the rest of the unit out on the pretext that the ZANLA detachment wanted to surrender. A little later a large group of auxiliaries walked into a well-laid trap. They were disarmed and their hands wired behind their backs. Since it was quite clear what was planned, a few were able to run and lose themselves in the bush, but forty-one of their number were executed on the spot, and their bodies left on the side of the road. The ZANLA group then moved off taking the SFAs arms and equipment with them.

On 2 May the Executive Council repealed all bans on ZANU and ZAPU, followed by another broad appeal for guerrillas to lay down their arms and surrender. The *Rhodesia Herald* was in the forefront of the propaganda offensive.

"The time has come to bring an end to the fighting. We guarantee their [the guerrillas] safety if they come in peace."

Nothing happened, of course, except for a perceptible rise in guerrilla attacks. Special Branch then turned to the *mujibas*. Mujibas acted as a kind of informal youth brigade made up of young rural toughs, not quite combatants, but loyal to the cause and useful as contact men, runners and fags. Trying to indoctrinate them against the revolution, however, was like shouting against the tempest. Youngsters with their eyes on proper weapons did what needed to be done, chanted what was told them to chant and swore loyalty to whomsoever asked. With this generally understood by all, they were duly trained, deployed as SFAs and thereafter left to their own devices. By virtue of the sheer numbers of volunteers that the programme was attracting, plus those press-ganged or coerced in some way to sign up, the operation was deemed a success. In due course, it was decided that the SFAs should be reoriented, stripped of their revolutionary

identity, given NATO weapons and integrated into the Security Forces proper.

Sithole then revealed that he had men under training in Uganda alongside the army of Idi Amin. This shady group, known as the 'Zimbabwe Strike Force', were ZANU men who had refused to fight alongside ZIPRA and had been sent from Zambia to Uganda for 'training'. In Operation *Favour,* however, numbers were numbers, and it was not particularly important who they were. The CIO chartered Jack Malloch's Air Trans-Africa to collect the contingent and bring them home. These men were billeted in the Gokwe area, but immediately became a problem when they began to terrorise the local area and resist efforts at integration. A simple, no-nonsense strategy was devised to deal with them.

Word was circulated that a high-ranking ZANU official would be arriving to address the group, and the commander was instructed to muster his men at the airfield where the official was due to land. The group was told that they would receive their pay at the same time. In the meanwhile, a large force of territorial troops quietly took up positions around the airstrip and stop groups deployed in the surrounding bush. Two eleven-ton army trucks with their canvas canopies drawn moved into position. When the rogue group was assembled, a spokesman with a loud hailer ordered them to lay down their weapons. The group hesitated and in confusion did not immediately comply. Flaps were thrown aside to reveal a heavy machine gun mounted on each truck , and a curtain of fire was laid down. Most of the guerrillas were cut down in the opening salvos, but a few managed to escape. These were picked off in ones and twos as they ran into the waiting stop groups. Within a few minutes, 180 men were dead.

Under new orders, the Shona auxiliaries were given the name '*Pfumo re Vhanu'*, or 'Spear of the People', while amaNdebele factions carried the same name in isiNdebele, '*Umkonto wa Bantu'*. A spear and shield emblem was assigned that was worn on brown fatigues. By the end of the transition, the 'Spear of the People' had become an almost conventional military formation comprising 10,500 men.

Operationally the SFA programme was a disaster. Although garnished with military apparel and armed with Portuguese manufactured G3 rifles, the new operatives had not been effectively re-educated and almost to a man retained their original loyalties. Because the unit was primarily made up of urban riff-raff, these loyalties were mainly to

themselves. However, those who were initially aligned to ZANLA or ZIPRA maintained that alliance and desertions were commonplace. Security Force details were increasingly reporting fleeting contacts with guerrilla groups among which were men using G3 and FN-FAL rifles.

So far, however, Operation *Favour* had been conducted behind closed doors. A handful of rather optimistic supernumeraries to the Special Branch Selous Scouts, who were part of the Psyops (Psychological Operations) programme, thought that the moment was ripe to break the story to the Rhodesian public. ComOps was doubtful but gave the go-ahead for a Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation camera team to be present at a rally to be addressed by Bishop Muzorewa. It was intended that they would selectively film and interview Security Force Auxiliaries loyal to the UANC.

Rhodesian whites, however, waking up to read the Sunday papers, were shocked to be confronted by a large photograph of Bishop Muzorewa holding a communist assault rifle aloft and addressing a rally in the Msana free zone. Clearly visible in the background were the surly faces of his SFAs. After a day of ruminating over this, the public was dealt another blow when Rhodesian television personality Johan Meiring interviewed on-camera a highly disreputable-looking guerrilla who claimed to be the new District Commissioner of Msana Tribal Trust Land. 'Comrade Max' was, in fact, a decommissioned pseudo operator occupied with odd jobs around the Selous Scout Fort, lately been dusted down for this role. Warming to his theme, Comrade Max waved his arm around and declared that no white man was to be found within his 1,000 square mile zone. He claimed to run "…the educational system and deal [sic] with civil problems as well as maintain order." Meiring closed the interview in deference to his subject by claiming that, in the Msana free zone, Comrade Max was the boss. The next day the *Rhodesia Herald* posted a banner headline reading "DC Max is the boss!"

After a moment of stunned silence, Parliament erupted in disbelief. The secret had been very closely guarded, and apparently, not a single parliamentarian had been briefed. Minister of Defence and Combined Operations Roger Hawkins was quick to put the record straight, and in a speech to the House on 16 August assured the members that Comrade Max was not a District Commissioner, and all civil offices concerned with Msana TTL, and indeed throughout the country, were intact and

functioning. As concern died down, however, white Rhodesians came to acknowledge the existence of the SFAs, and to accept that it was just a sign of the times. In September 1979 the SFAs were deployed to Protected Villages and keeps around the country which helped to free up the Internal Affairs Guard Force to patrol and protect the nation's vital communications links. The auxiliaries were used and touted as an extension of the Security Forces, but everyone took them for what they were. The Rhodesians had created private armies so that Sithole and Muzorewa might blend into the militant culture of black nationalism. This at the very least was a tacit acknowledgement on the part of the authorities that the standards of 'Western civilisation' no longer applied. Future elections, it was assumed, would be run by African rules.

Perhaps the last ballot to be held in Rhodesia under these coveted Western standards was the rather perfunctory referendum of 30 January 1979. The ballot was organised to test the response of the white population to an ultimatum they really had little choice but to accept. What Smith offered was a choice between black majority rule, heavily tilted in favour of the white minority, or oblivion. The majority rule constitution was unveiled on 30 November for the perusal of the last white dominated Rhodesian electorate, and in presenting it to his constituency, Smith endured a significant amount of abuse and censure. As he spoke at various venues throughout the country, he was accused of selling the whites down the river, although, of course, he and everybody else correctly took this as bark and not bite. It was too late by then to change the course of events, and there was no alternative anyway. Black majority rule was the future, and it would come sooner rather than later. As late as it was, however, white Rhodesia still felt that to some degree it had the right to define the rules of black government to suit itself. Smith's solution was the best that anyone could have hoped for, because, after all, old Smithy could always be relied upon to get the best deal. Had he not stated quite plainly in Geneva that majority rule did not preclude responsible government?

The new constitution required that the new black Prime Minister select a percentage of his cabinet from political parties other than his own, which ought to have guaranteed the Rhodesian Front a strong showing on the front benches. Also, any effort on the part of a black government to indigenise the civil service would be halted by a Public Service Commission whose chairman and members would be white. The principal

agencies of government – Law and Order and Defence – were categorically to remain in white hands. Further, the Prime Minister would be obliged to select his military commanders on the advice of a board appointed for the purpose, the members of which would be made up of the retiring commander, one other commander and a third appointed by the Prime Minister. Property rights were to be protected, which meant there would be no change in the current land tenure system. Any amendment of the constitution would require an eighty per cent majority, which in effect would mean the support of every black member as well as six whites. All in all, the rights of whites to live as they had and to govern by proxy were protected. If an incoming black prime minister sought to tear up the terms of the new constitution, he could be immediately arrested and removed from office. Despite a rough referendum campaign, 57,000 out of 67,000 whites voted in favour of the proposals.

23
The Toilet Window

See, the window is far too small. A child could hardly get through, let alone a fat man of nearly twenty stone who couldn't lean forward and loosen his own shoelaces – **Angus Shaw**

The Year 1979 was launched by Robert Mugabe as *Gukurahundi*, or 'The Year of the People's Storm'. Writing in an emotional epistle to his cadres in the field, he had this to say:

"The enemy is battered and dazed. Let us now move towards him with all our mustered reserves, always remembering that ours is a people's war, fought by the people and for the people."

And so it was. The final tally of dismal Jimmies for 1978 was 13,500, an increase of 3,000 over the previous year. What once had been the 'chicken run' now became the 'owl run', taken by the wise at night. An old observation used by German Jews was heard once again in Rhodesia:

'The pessimists left the country and the optimists went to the gas chamber.'

Rhodesian Indians had their own version of this, and many of them also began to disperse to greener pastures.

'When the Jews start leaving it's time to go, but when the Indians start leaving it's too late.'

Thus, all the usual gags were in circulation, each illustrating in one way or another that things were rapidly going downhill. On 2 January, twenty-seven-year-old James Jolliffe opened the annual scorecard when he was shot dead during a guerrilla attack on his trading store in the Gatooma district. The following day, thirty-nine-year-old District Commissioner David Mirams was killed in a landmine blast. Five days later another landmine blast in the Odzi area claimed the life of Rosemary Hacking. The day after that, fifty-four-year-old-year-old Petrus Blignaut and his forty-seven-year-old wife June were killed in a vehicle ambush in the Selukwe area. Their seventeen-year-old son engaged the guerrilla group and beat them off in a fierce firefight. On 30 January, Beatrice Farmer Japie Smit and his wife Connie were killed when their vehicle was ambushed near the couple's farm. On 1 February, animal health inspector Lukas Koen was ambushed and killed while visiting a farm in the Umvuma area.

To even the score somewhat, a daring raid on the Munhava oil storage depot in Beira was staged by a team of Rhodesian SAS assisted by South African Recces. Such acts of hopeless daring never failed to uplift flagging Rhodesian spirits. The attack was a seaborne assault, with the naval component provided by South Africa. Operators using RPG rockets and heavy machine guns with tracer rounds started eight major oil fires that ironically were later extinguished by South African contractors.

The highlight of the 1979 killing season, however, was the action of 15-year-old Churchill School pupil Jamie Scott. Scott and a friend were ambushed while riding tandem on a motorcycle in a rural area. Scott was hit five times but survived the first shock, and then using only an unreliable Heckler & Koch G3 rifle drove his attackers off with a full frontal charge. Apart from achieving the status of a living legend at every white school in the country, Jamie was honoured by the nation with the Conspicuous Gallantry Award, the highest given to a civilian during the war. Sadly, the medal was later sold to defray medical expenses incurred as a consequence of Scott's severe injuries.

The low point of the year was the downing of a second Air Rhodesia Viscount, the *Umniati,* shot down on 12 February by a ground-to-air missile. The circumstances were more or less identical to the downing of the *Hunyani* some five months earlier*,* except that this time none of the fifty-nine passengers and crew survived. Less mirthful on this occasion, Nkomo claimed once again that his men believed General Walls to be on the flight, which he maintained made it a legitimate military target. Following this second tragedy, aircraft leaving Kariba Airport spiralled to high altitude over the lake before proceeding south. Heat dispersal devices were also fitted to the engines of civil aircraft to confuse the controls of heat-seeking missiles.

In response to this, however, perhaps the most brazen and dramatic cross-border raid of the entire war was mounted, with the specific object of killing Nkomo. Operation *Bastille* of April 1979 involved a SAS flying column transported across Kariba and driven through Zambia to the capital Lusaka. A well-co-ordinated lightning raid virtually destroyed Nomo's suburban house, yet the intended target managed to slip through the net, claiming that he had escaped through the toilet window. Speculation persisted that he had been tipped off, for it challenged the imagination to suppose that a man of Nomo's bulk found it possible to squeeze through the

narrow aperture of a toilet window, unobserved while bullets and bombs were flying all around him.

A few months after the *Umniati* incident, a senior ZIPRA intelligence commander by the name of Elliot Sibanda, codenamed *Black Swine*, was abducted by the Selous Scouts in Botswana and returned to Rhodesia. After recovering from a gunshot wound to the abdomen, he became an important – in fact probably the most important – intelligence source of the entire war. What Sibanda had to offer came as a complete surprise to ComOps. A specially convened meeting of the inter-services committee was briefed by a member of Special Branch on new and potentially deadly developments.

The apparent lethargy with which Joshua Nkomo and ZIPRA had so far conducted the war, a methodology that earned ZIPRA the nickname *matshowshowe*, or 'shuffling walker', was, in fact, part of a deliberate strategy. The deployment of guerrillas into the field was limited so that large numbers could be held back to build up a powerful conventional capacity. With the support and guidance of Nomo's Soviet backers, ZIPRA mechanised infantry would then invade Rhodesia via the two bridgeheads of Victoria Falls and Chirundu. Initially, the airports at Kariba, Victoria Falls and Wankie would be seized, after which regular troops would be flown in using Libyan transport aircraft. Once territorial control had been achieved, the right to form a government would be announced from a position of strength. Nkomo let it be known reasonably widely that he anticipated being in full control of Salisbury by May 1979.

Security forces were promptly deployed along the northern border to bolster security and pre-empt any such possible deployment. In the meanwhile, ComOps went to work planning some suitable response to nip Nomo's elaborate scheme in the bud. The plan that swiftly came to the fore was to hit Nkomo personally, and if possible kill him. This was the umpteenth time a hit of this nature had been mooted since Nomo's release from prison, but except for the Lusaka raid, it was always called off for one reason or the other. The CIO's chief assassin, Alan Brice, whose opportunities to kill Nkomo had been many, was one of those angered and frustrated by the constant indecision. Typically the final go-ahead was given for a mission only when achieving it had reached its maxim degree of impossibility.

In fact, it is not difficult to imagine that the situation regarding Joshua Nkomo presented Smith with a conundrum. Public anger demanded that something be done to revenge the downing of the two Viscounts, but as long as Smith was trying to negotiate a settlement with Nkomo, he was loath to swop the kid gloves for the mailed fist. This is merely conjecture, of course, but if true it would explain how Nkomo continued to survive.

24
The Old Parrot Cry

If the law is a bad law, there is always the contingent right to take action that you would not otherwise take – **British Prime Minister James Callaghan**

The first election to be held under the rules of universal suffrage passed off with a minimum of fuss. The Patriotic Front deployed a combined total of about 10,000 armed men into the field but failed to disrupt the process. Nkomo's orders were to ensure that every man with a gun equalled one thousand with a vote. Between 17 and 21 April, however, 1,869,000 votes out of a possible 2,862,000 were cast. Only nineteen polling stations out of almost a thousand were attacked, and no one was shut down. A sense of solemn purpose hung about the whole business. From all sides, black and white, east and west, it was clear that the nation and the region were desperate for an end to the war.

Smith and his cabinet were at pains to point out quite how unique an achievement this was. For the conduct of an African ballot to be universally endorsed as free and fair was in itself a fact unprecedented in black Africa. However, while white Rhodesia clung to the hope that the impossible had been achieved, the press and international diplomatic community wrote it off as a charade. The results were as expected. Bishop Abel Muzorewa emerged as the Prime Minister-elect, and his UANC took home fifty-one out of seventy-two black seats. Ndabaningi Sithole's ZANU won twelve, the Rhodesian Front twenty-eight and Chief Kayisa Ndweni's United Federal Party nine. Ahead of Ndweni in the popular vote, but winning no seats was Chief Chirau's Zimbabwe United Peoples Organisation.

When viewed holistically, this was an extraordinary achievement, and although it was riddled with flaws, it is hard to imagine a solution that would not have been. If personal ambition were to have been removed from the equation, much might have been achieved. Mugabe, however, desired power above all else, and Smith above all things wanted to prove that he had been right all along. The election was deemed free and fair, however, because no plausible claims of misconduct were made. British election observer Lord Boyd returned a balanced verdict that the poll had been as fairly conducted as possible, and as Britain thoughtfully rubbed her chin,

and the UN waited on her lead, the awkwardly named Republic of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia came into being.

On 31 May, Ian Douglas Smith celebrated his last day in office, and a day later Bishop Abel Muzorewa took over. In keeping with his occasional flirtations with the absurd, Muzorewa arrived in a replica pioneer-era ox wagon with a spear in his hand and his signature West African robes worn over his suit. If the robes had once seemed more theatrical than appropriate, then the ox wagon was even more bizarre, and it is hard to imagine why he chose it. The *Rhodesia Herald* gaily lampooned the event in the following day's edition, spreading across the front page a photograph of the Bishop on his journey through town, dressed up, as Ian Smith put it, like a bantam cock. Smith, of course, cringed at the entire ghastly spectacle, wondering not for the first time whether he had not made a disastrous mistake.

Not everyone, of course, was convinced of British fair play and, as might have been expected, Ndabaningi Sithole cried foul. At a press conference held in his ZANU offices, the defeated chairman read out an angry statement in which he alleged grave irregularities and demanded a commission of inquiry. He refused, in the meantime, to take up his seats and was delighted when eight of Muzorewa's MPs led by James Chikerema rebelled, extinguishing the Prime Minister's majority in an instant. Sithole then petitioned the high court to declare the election null and void, at which point he found himself subjected to surveillance, searches and random arrest. Soon after that, he was handed news of the Security Force massacre of his auxiliaries. He must then have been struck with an unnerving sense of déjà vu, and a week or two later he took up his seats.

A month after the election, in the meanwhile, white Rhodesia's ray of hope began to shine a little brighter. In the spring of 1979, the Conservatives seized a narrow forty-four-seat majority in a general election that ushered out James Callaghan and introduced Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher wasted no time in attending to the Rhodesia question, announcing that her government would take immediate steps to ascertain whether the country was now in compliance with the six principles of NIBMAR. In general, official verbiage seemed to hint very strongly that recognition and the lifting of sanctions were probable.

Both the British and Rhodesian Governments knew that Nkomo and Mugabe had been warned by Nyerere and Kaunda that, if the elections

achieved a significantly positive result, support for the armed struggle might be withdrawn. The moment, therefore, seemed propitious for Britain to act in Rhodesia's favour, and if she was indeed tempted to do so, she was in good company. Intelligence sources suggested that the governments of France, Germany and other less influential European states were willing to recognise Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, but would only do so if Britain took the lead.

These developments caught Jimmy Carter somewhat on the wrong foot. His had not been a spectacular term of office, and the odds were fair that he would not serve a second. Eventually, of course, one of the happiest marriages in political history would be consummated between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and if Reagan had been in office at that time, he would almost certainly have supported Muzorewa's premiership. Indeed, a US Senate resolution that supported recognition of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was passed on 15 May 1979. Carter, however, was guided by the hand that picked the cotton, and cautiously announced that he would make a decision on the matter a week later. That brief lapse of time, however, made all the difference.

25
The Final Furlong

If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies – **General Moshe Dayan**

There was a moment when the Rhodesian public, some in hope and some in fear, held their breaths. The best possible news for white Rhodesia was the return to power in Britain of the Conservative Party. These were desperate times, and the distant voice of Roy Welensky had by then become very faint indeed. Even those old timers, Smith not least among them, who remembered the Federal days, greeted the news of a Tory victory with a deep sigh of relief. The *Rhodesia Herald* made much of the event:

"…the Iron Lady will be able to put some steel in the souls of Western politicians in general and President Carter in particular."

While Jimmy Carter, with his eye fixed firmly on his black electorate, waited and watched, Margaret Thatcher underwent a necessary metamorphosis. Before she could think much about white Rhodesia, she was forced to consider the value of British economic investment in black Africa. When discussing the question with Commonwealth Secretary-General Sonny Ramphal, she described both Nkomo and Mugabe as terrorists, and when Ramphal tried to correct her, she replied: "Well, of course, they are terrorists. They are just like the IRA."

This did not bode well, and when Ramphal communicated this general view of things to the leaders of the Afro-Asian bloc, almost every ambassador signed a letter to the British Government warning against recognition of Muzorewa's administration. Thus it was that while Ian Smith was receiving comforting prognostications from other members of the British establishment, both Thatcher and Carrington were being pulled in an entirely different direction. If Nkomo had once been told that Britain could not afford to hand Rhodesia over to blacks, Thatcher was now hearing that she could ill afford not to.

British economic ballast in black Africa was centred on the oil fields of the Niger Delta, and in Abuja, where Nigerian kingpins controlled most of the region's cash flow. Black Africa had earlier frowned on Nigerian General Joseph Garba's effort to assist in a possible compromise between Nkomo and Smith, and that criticism was raised an octave when the

initiative failed. In the aftermath, Garba was chastened, the breach quickly healed, and Nigeria ushered neatly back into line.

In May 1979 it was announced by Nigerian Military Leader Olusegun Obasanjo that Nigerian public contracts would henceforth be denied to British firms. This moratorium would remain in effect until majority rule was established in Rhodesia. In July, Shell-BP Nigeria was nationalised in protest against the sale of Nigerian petroleum to South Africa. The Nigerian Government then dumped £500 million sterling on the international currency exchanges in order first to destabilise sterling and secondly to dispel any doubts about Nigeria's determination and regional economic clout. Jimmy Carter, in the meanwhile, made his decision and announced that the US Government would not be lifting sanctions against Rhodesia. If Thatcher had been sitting on the fence, then this helped tilt her towards the inevitable.

Her next challenge came with her first Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, to be held in Lusaka in August of that year. It was there, in the heartland of the liberation struggle, that the Frontline presidents were preparing to do battle. Thatcher was naturally forewarned and arrived at the venue cautioning all that she intended to stand her ground. Many supposed that this presaged a spirited defence of white Rhodesia. Smith indeed nurtured that hope, but he was out of power, and the debris of many past failures had been flushed away with him. Thatcher may have been the Iron Lady, but she was no fool. The defence of white hegemony in southern Africa was indefensible in the context of modern politics, and she of all people knew it. Just as she had no tolerance for being pushed around by blacks, she was not going to be prevailed upon by a population of deluded expatriates, even if they were her kith and kin.

Sally Mugabe, as First Lady of ZANU, and no doubt of Zimbabwe in waiting, offered a thoughtful opinion on what was expected from Thatcher. "What does Lady Thatcher want to prove, that she is racist? I suspect she is…it would only be a racist who would underscore the Smith-Muzorewa regime."

Even this pejorative tone was too soft for some. Edgar Tekere was chosen to represent ZANU at the Lusaka meeting, and for this, he was armed with some powerful language indeed.

"Mrs Thatcher will be fighting to have the conference totally ignore the vitally important question of the need to get rid of the evil settler racist

armed forces and have them replaced by the people's patriotic force… because her racist mind deeply appreciates that the minority racist settler interest will remain securely entrenched by the racist settler forces on whose back treacherous Muzorewa rides."

If Margaret Thatcher shuddered a little at this salvo of Stalinist invective, it at least primed her to understand what sort of people she would be dealing with. She said nothing at the time, but in her later memoirs, she had much to get off her chest.

"…their forces [The Patriotic Front] had carried out atrocities which disgusted everyone, and I was as keen to avoid dealing with terrorists as I would be at home."

The world, however, had changed a great deal since the days of Federation, and the early months and years of UDI. There was no longer any question of compromise, of easing in the black majority or devising complex formulas for power sharing. The white stand in Rhodesia had now become a bitter rear-guard action and, for those unwilling to live under black rule, there would be no future anywhere in Africa. Thatcher was faced with quite a few unpalatable facts, but she was unafraid to confront them.

"Our strategy was to take full responsibility ourselves for reaching a settlement…to obtain that result we had to make it clear that Britain would be ready to *resume authority in Rhodesia* [author's italics] and to hold fresh elections. We knew also that there would have to be significant changes to the present constitution of Rhodesia if, after elections, the new government was to receive international recognition and acceptance."

So much for the cold war, in the background, the hot war continued to rage bloody and bitter. To illustrate the fact that the Rhodesians still had plenty of fight left in them, the 1979 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting opened with the Rhodesians raising smoke and dust all over Lusaka. Two raids in quick succession destroyed ZIPRA's intelligence HQ in the Roma suburb, and a sizable ZIPRA arms dump a few miles west of the capital. There was much talk at ComOps about aiming some action directly at the conference itself, which might help to remind the Frontline leaders that it was Rhodesia that still called the shots north of the Limpopo.

In the end, it was humour that dug most deeply into the spleen of the black leaders assembling in Lusaka. Their dignity was fragile as they gathered somewhat nervously in the Zambian capital. The time had come to parade their sovereignty to the world and to wring from Margaret Thatcher

the last drop of colonial blood. A cartoon appeared in the Rhodesian *Sunday Mail* depicting the fabled Green Leader circling Lusaka International Airport in his Canberra jet, giving the thumbs up to Her Majesty's aircraft to land. To Kenneth Kaunda's inexpressible relief, the shots fired at the 1979 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting remained rhetorical, and no one was killed.

Despite all of this, these exchanges proved in every respect more damaging to white Rhodesia than any action seen so far in the shooting war. Commonwealth Director-General Sonny Ramphal was clearly numbered among the Afro-Asian majority, and as such he kept the Rhodesia issue off the agenda for three vital days, allowing ample time for Thatcher to be petitioned on the sidelines just to ensure that she understood clearly which road to take.

Thatcher would have preferred ambiguity, in the time-honoured British tradition, to leave some room for manoeuvre later. However, Sir Anthony Duff, future head of MI5 and current Under Secretary of State for the Foreign Office, lent the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Lord Peter Carrington, the benefit of his experience. In this instance, ambiguity would serve no purpose. Clarity was essential. It was finally an all-black show, and Ian Smith, who for fifteen-years had rubbed British noses in the dirt, was now out of the picture. It was time for past failures of British diplomacy in Africa to be expunged. Thatcher agreed and, leaving the details of her statement on Zimbabwe-Rhodesia to Duff and Carrington to prepare, she retired early to fortify herself for the conference.

The following day she delivered her keynote address to the assembled Commonwealth leaders with less tight-lipped resentment than might have been expected. She assured her audience that Britain had every intention of recognising Rhodesian independence, but not under the current Constitution, and not within the terms of the internal settlement as it stood. The power that the white minority enjoyed to block any undesirable amendment to the Constitution was disproportionate to their demographic representation. This rendered the internal settlement defective in the view of the British Government.

Such had been the cynical expectation that this unexpected change of British direction was seen by the black delegates as a significant coup, and it won Margaret Thatcher rapturous and sustained applause. Ian Smith must have seen the life of Rhodesia flashing before his eyes as he heard the

news. Grasping the moment, the Commonwealth leaders deluged Thatcher with petitions to push the envelope further. The first to reach her as the glow of victory passed were Kenneth Kaunda, Michael Manley of Jamaica and Malcolm Fraser of Australia. All three urged her to convene another constitutional conference where the internal settlement could be reworked. It would be fine if it were expanded to include the Patriotic Front, for quite obviously, Muzorewa's government lacked the authenticity of genuine black power. White abhorrence towards dealing with Mugabe and Nkomo would have to be overcome, and in any case, theoretically, it was no longer a white decision.

The British Prime Minister agreed to follow this route, although no one knew how easily Nkomo, Mugabe or Muzorewa could be persuaded to comply. What could reasonably be taken for granted, however, was that the enthusiastic endorsement of the Frontline States would give the Patriotic Front very little space to deviate. Abel Muzorewa's commitment to the scheme, of course, was neither immediate nor enthusiastic, for he understood clearly that he would not be able to survive a head-to-head encounter with Robert Mugabe. From the right wing of his coalition, the voices of Smith and others counselled against accepting any invitation to re-negotiate, but on his left, the two chiefs were equally insistent that he should. The reasons for this were important, and close to the heart of all good and Christian men.

Neither Jeremiah Chirau nor Kayisa Ndweni stood any chance whatsoever of winning power so they could apply their thoughts to practical matters like the suffering of the people. The security establishment knew by then that the war, if not lost, was at least unwinnable. Besides protecting vital transport and economic interests, the armed forces had more or less abandoned the countryside. The policy now was to concentrate resources on destroying the enemy outside and to batter the neighbouring infrastructure as much as possible to effect a change of heart among the Frontline leaders. The net result of this was to give the guerrilla factions already deployed a virtual free run of the tribal areas. The nationalist presence in these areas, however, seemed always to degenerate into a reign of terror. Desensitised, swaggering, power-drunk youth without moral compass behaved with abominable cruelty and inhumanity. Their job was to ensure the political eminence of their party, and this catalysed a ferocious cycle of horror and

counter horror that persisted until the end of the colonial period, and beyond.

The people, of course, could barely tell one faction from the other, and it was a simple choice of who they feared the most. The police documented daily reports of horrific killings, torture, burnings, maiming and rape. These atrocities might have been merely a symptom of Africa to many whites, but to the two chiefs and to Muzorewa, the human cost was just too high. In due course, and to his credit, Muzorewa grasped the nettle, announcing to Parliament on August 22 that he had accepted an invitation from the British Government to attend a constitutional conference to be held in London the following month.

Lancaster House. L to R Abel Muzorewa, Peter Carrington, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe

26
Lancaster House

I am not a happy man. I felt that we had been cheated and had agreed to a deal which, to some extent, robbed us of our victory in the field –
Robert Mugabe

The Lancaster House Conference opened in London on 10 September 1979 amid enormous fanfare and anticipation. Politicians of all hues and opinions gathered at the magnificent Lancaster House, in the shade of autumnal groves of plane trees and oaks, and in the peace and gentility of predictable laws and rational actions. However, the chapter of blood and iron in southern Africa was not quite ended.

The seeds of Operation *Uric* were sown in April 1979, as Lusaka was feeling the weight of Operation *Bastille.* A new and disturbing dimension to the war was revealed when a single FRELIMO soldier was captured some 150-miles inside Rhodesia. Under interrogation, it was revealed that he was part of a much larger combined FRELIMO and ZANLA operation. The objective of this alliance was to penetrate Rhodesia far enough to destroy the vital rail links to South Africa, which, together with some associated disruption of road transport, would bring about a rapid economic collapse and an end to the war.

Rhodesia's rail link to the south was a single artery that, once severed, would effectively cut off sustenance to the nation. ZANLA's first attempt was felt in January 1979, when Romanian-trained explosives handlers rigged a boosted Soviet TMH anti-tank mine beneath the line linking Rutenga to Shabani. A locomotive detonated the charge, blasting out a metre of rail, but failing to derail the rolling stock. Later that month another section of line was blown not far from the first, and soon more sabotage attempts followed.

In the short term, an ingenious means to counter these attacks was devised by the Rhodesian Engineer Squadron. A light electrical charge was sent up the line that was not sufficient to cause a shock but enough to trigger any electrical detonators that were handled while touching the rail. A good many ZANLA sappers were killed in this way without their comrades being any the wiser.

At this time it was estimated that at least 500 FRELIMO troops were operating in the country alongside ZANLA. ZANLA had also acquired more or less free use of the entire FRELIMO logistics, transport and communications structure, which effectively brought FRELIMO and Mozambique into the internal war. Part of this combined strategy, not unlike Nomo's conventional plan, was to try and gain control of a piece of physical territory in Rhodesia to improve its standing at any future power negotiations.

Of course, this could not be allowed to happen, and Rhodesia had its own strategy to counter it. Under P.W. Botha, the South Africans were vastly more generous in dispensing their military favours, and while that particular iron was hot, the Rhodesians intended to strike. Operation *Uric* was planned to smash Mozambique's ability to transport guerrillas to Rhodesia, while at the same time illustrating the high price of picking a fight with white Rhodesia.

Arguably the most crucial access route for ZANLA guerrillas into Rhodesia was through the Gaza province, where road and rail links ran from Maputo to Rutenga. This conduit brought ZANLA men and equipment west through a FRELIMO forward base at Mapai. Both the road and the railway line followed the Limpopo River on its north bank, with a vital bridge at the small town of Chokwe, and any number of secondary bridges and culverts after that. The main thrust of Operation *Uric* was to take out as many of those bridges as possible and in particular the main bridge over the Limpopo. The purpose of this was twofold, to cripple the local Mozambican transport network and to isolate the sizeable forward base at Mapai before launching an attack against it.

Operation *Uric* began on Saturday 1 September 1979 and continued for most of the following week. It combined waves of air and ground assaults on selected targets up the length of the Limpopo that severely disrupted communications between Maputo and the FRELIMO and ZANLA forward bases. On 6 September, however, an assault on the main base at Mapai quickly deteriorated into intense and bloody trench fighting. As the day wore on, RLI ground units were forced to swallow the unprecedented humiliation of having their attack beaten off by an inferior enemy. A South African Puma helicopter carrying fourteen troops took a direct hit from an RPG 7 rocket that killed all on board. Army units despatched to investigate found the wreckage and the bodies and assumed

that they would be recovered once Mapai had successfully been taken. Mapai remained untaken, however, and the bodies unrecovered.

In Durban, 700 kilometres to the south, the Rhodesian national rugby squad prepared to challenge Natal. The match was the epilogue to an otherwise disastrous 1979 Currie Cup season. The news came through that Rhodesian fullback Leroy Duberly, excused from the match due to prior commitments, had been one of those travelling in the downed Puma. A shocked crowd at Kingsmead Stadium stood and observed a minute of silence, after which a lone bugler played the last post. The two teams then took the field in what would be one of the last games Rhodesia would play as an honorary province of South Africa.

As all this was taking place, Robert Mugabe arrived in London angry and frustrated, feeling that for the umpteenth time that he was being forced to divert his attention from the war when it was clearly the only strategy achieving results. Operation *Uric* cost numerous lives and caused considerable damage, but the more ferocious Rhodesian attacks became the closer the regime was to collapse, and it surprised him that neither Machel nor Kaunda seemed able to appreciate this fact for themselves.

Immediately before his arrival in London, Mugabe attended a meeting of non-aligned states held in Havana, and there he and Nkomo lobbied extensively for a resolution to be framed repudiating the Lusaka Accord. Instead, the two were summoned to a meeting on the sidelines with Nyerere, Kaunda and Machel were it was made clear to both that the war was proving too costly. If the Patriotic Front boycotted the conference, their bases in Zambia and Mozambique would be closed, and white Rhodesia would walk away with the spoils of war.

Thus, the two put in a reluctant appearance in London, with Mugabe in particular in a sullen and combative mood. For most of Prime Minister James Callaghan's term, the British had tended to be remote from the process, but Mugabe now sensed their returned with some of the old flame of kith and kin restored. His nose was attuned to a conspiracy, and the place was crawling with rats. No one liked him, and every faction other than his own would have gladly paid to see him dead. He distrusted whites in general and the British in particular, and while he was not above theatrics, his initial concerns for his own security were both sound and genuine. He accepted a two-member security detail from the British Special Branch as a necessary evil but preferred to rely on his own ZANU 'protocol' unit.

Mugabe, of course, had every reason to fear for his safety. The recent attempt on Joshua Nomo's life in Lusaka was fresh in his memory, as were the deaths of Chitepo and Jason Moyo, and, of course, the still unexplained disappearance of Edson Sithole. While Smith might be compromised, and his governing establishment cast into disarray, the Rhodesian security services were still lean, active and very dangerous. At this, the eleventh hour, Mugabe was acknowledged as Rhodesian Public Enemy Number One, and on 31 August 1979, Alan Brice was given the job of assassinating him.

Mugabe was well protected in Mozambique, and this was for one good reason. Unlike Lusaka, Maputo had very few resident whites among whom a Rhodesian assassin could mingle. It was therefore decided that the assassination would take place in London where, as an Englishman, Brice could merge with no difficulty. However, the Lancaster House conference was organised in something of a hurry, which gave him very little time to prepare.

Brice had proved himself to be a cunning, remorseless and extremely dangerous operative. He experimented with a variety of strategies including a ricin-smeared air rifle pellet, a sniper attack and a suitcase bomb. After much experimentation and consideration, he opted for a form of the latter. Plastic explosives would be sealed into fruit cans and packed into a briefcase reinforced on one side to turn it into a directional mine. Brice waited and watched Mugabe's activities from the lobby of a Kensington hotel until he established precisely where and when the bomb could be most effectively detonated.

The code word for the operation was 'See you in November'. A meeting would either take place or not take place in November, depending on the decision made. When the ground had been studied, Mugabe's movements to and from Lancaster House mapped, and the bomb prepared, Brice telephoned his contact in Johannesburg. Was it go for the November date? No, came the reply, there would be no November date.

The mission was aborted by persons unknown, and for reasons that still remain obscure today. Was it the jitters? Was it the old Rhodesian 'let's wait and see?' Brice suspected an MI6 mole in Rhodesian intelligence, perhaps even Ken Flower. An innocent ex-SAS man on a hiking trip to Europe was detained and questioned thoroughly as he re-entered Britain, which was a clear indication that British intelligence had been tipped off.

Someone at a very senior level in Britain was protecting Mugabe. Had Brice been given the signal to go ahead and kill Mugabe, he would undoubtedly have succeeded, and the history of Rhodesia and Zimbabwe would have been very different.

In the meanwhile, on a political front, Mugabe was also the subject of a conspiracy that, in his eyes at least, was probably no less sinister. Without question, Thatcher and her cabinet wanted to recognise Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, and in this, they were probably supported by most of the centrists and conservatives of the British establishment. While they could not openly do this, Mugabe's strategy was informed by his suspicion that they would search for any viable pretext. If they succeeded, it would mean an end to sanctions, an end to the war and the end of Mugabe's personal bid for power.

Mugabe may have been paranoid, but that did not make him wrong. Everyone really was out to get him, and from his vantage point on the fringes of the conference, Ken Flower also thought he caught a sniff of conspiracy. Occasional rumours and hints suggested to him that the British intended to try and nudge the Patriotic Front into staging a walk out. If this could be achieved, then the conference could go on to ratify a solution that would avoid taking into account the input of the extremist elements. A walkout was in fact precisely what Mugabe had in mind, but it had to be planned in such a way that the Patriotic Front could not be held responsible. He needed to expose the conference as a sham, while at the same time giving Samora Machel no possible excuse to withdraw his sponsorship of the war. To achieve this, Mugabe would have to play his hand very carefully, and indeed he did.

For better or for worse, the chairman of the conference was in every respect as cunning and Machiavellian as him. Lord Peter Carrington had his eye on Mugabe, but he was not as determined to exclude him from the deal as Mugabe and Flower supposed. Carrington had cut his political teeth during the 'Winds of Change' period, and his cue regarding colonial disengagement was taken largely from Macmillan. It was not Mugabe who languished in Carrington's crosshairs, but Ian Smith.

Smith was a much easier man for a fellow warrior like Carrington to like, and of course, Smith was more culturally in tune with the British than Mugabe could ever be. It also helped Carrington in no small way that Smith had the most lamentable understanding of constitutional law. Smith arrived

in London believing that any agreement would be subject to the approval of the parliament of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and that as a consequence he would be able to engineer the blocking of its adoption. This was his secret weapon, and he was understandably dismayed and enraged when Chief Justice Hector Macdonald arrived in London and briefed the Muzorewa delegation on the actual position. In his memoirs, Smith went as far as accusing Macdonald of treason, but despite this, the message was quite simple. Britain did not recognise the Muzorewa government or the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitution, so the matter would be debated by the House of Commons only, and would never feature on the agenda of any parliamentary sitting in Salisbury.

Thus Smith lost control of events and was effectively shunted aside as an anachronism. His very existence was a brake on the sad but inevitable business at hand. Nonetheless, the British knew they had a fight on their hands, and Margaret Thatcher, who played no direct role, was monitoring events very carefully.

“I had no illusions,” she later wrote, “about the scale of the task ahead. It was never going to be easy to steer Rhodesia to independence, legitimacy and stability.”

How seriously she took the matter was evidenced by the fact that Lord Carrington was chosen to chair the conference. The lowly Ivor Richard hosted Geneva, but the Foreign Secretary himself headed Lancaster House, and more than that, he was arguably the most accomplished and determined Foreign Secretary the office had seen for almost thirty years. Carrington was no experimental newcomer like David Owen, but a graduate of Eton and Sandhurst who in 1938 succeeded to the 6th Baronetcy Carrington. In 1938, at the tender age of twenty-one, he took up his seat in the House of Lords, rising to the rank of major in the Grenadier Guards during World War II. From there served a number of British Prime Ministers, including Churchill and Anthony Eden. Later appointed High Commissioner to Australia, by the time he joined Margaret Thatcher’s Cabinet he had been in public office for thirty-four years. Carrington was more than ready to deal with a problem that had vexed Whitehall almost from the moment the Union Jack felt the first buffet of a Mashonaland wind.

Both Carrington and Mugabe had secret weapons. Carrington’s was his stooped and vaguely owlish appearance, which along with a sometimes

detached demeanour, made him appear bungling and obtuse. While Smith swallowed the ruse and made the mistake of treating Carrington accordingly, Mugabe, although to a degree uncertain about his purpose, at no time mistook him for a fool. Mugabe's secret weapon, in the meanwhile, was infinitely less subtle but no less effective. He introduced as his press secretary the theatrical and acerbic Edson Zvobgo, who was to act as his cruder alter ego. Zvobgo was an interesting character who, at one time or another, batted for all the main nationalist teams. He had all the relevant credentials of detention, self-education and membership of the Rhodesian bar, and a viciously caustic turn of phrase that was perfectly adapted to represent Mugabe's mood of the moment.

It was Zvobgo job to regurgitate the events of the Lancaster House Conference into suitable vignettes for the consumption of the press. Apart from this, he was permitted to entertain himself in any way he chose. He commonly drank himself into insensibility and deployed such verbal flourishes as telling Margaret Thatcher she could jump in the Thames. Thatcher, of course, could quite easily have shredded Zvobgo's back with a thorough lashing of her own tongue, but she never did. The Foreign Office would occasionally strike back with a tepid poke in the ribs such as suggesting that he was a drunkard, to which Zvogbo would joyfully agree. The most important result of his monopoly of Patriotic Front press statements, however, was that Joshua Nkomo was given almost no opportunity to make any of his own. Zvobgo was, and remained for many years, strictly Robert Mugabe's man.

Carrington perceived very quickly that the only way the Conference could be brought to a satisfactory conclusion was to settle matters in such a way that Robert Mugabe was guaranteed victory. If things did not go the way of the ZANU leader, he would extricate himself from the Conference and move in some direction to destroy its credibility. Carrington, therefore, pondered two possible strategies. The easiest, and in the short term that most likely to succeed, would be a second-class solution that came to be known euphemistically as the 'low road'. The 'low road' was Mugabe's darkest fear. It required that the Patriotic Front be pushed to walk out, allowing the delegates to pursue a settlement with Muzorewa. This would be legitimised by the fact that Nkomo would be likely to be drawn in to include himself in some capacity. The 'high road', or the all-party route, would be infinitely more difficult to achieve, but it was the route that

Carrington preferred and the one that he doggedly pursued. He used the 'low road' only as a threat from time to time to anchor Mugabe to reasonable commitments.

On a practical level, Carrington's strategy was to break the process up into units and deal with each conclusively before moving on to the next. On this basis, he dealt with and disposed of the constitutional issue first. This was achieved with deceptive ease. One minor difficulty was deciding the number of seats to be reserved for whites. The twenty-eight agreed under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitution were reduced to twenty. Also removed was the constitutional blocking mechanism that attached to those seats. To compensate, minority rights, including civil service jobs, pensions, homeowners and land rights, were protected by a Bill of Rights that was protected against amendment for ten years. The Civil Service, however, lost the general protection it enjoyed under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitution. A clause labelled 'the Presidential Directive' allowed the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, to appoint personnel to key administrative positions that made the Constitution a great deal more acceptable to the black intelligentsia. The requirement that the Cabinet be based on proportional representation was omitted, which meant that ministerial selection was entirely the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

The only moments of real crisis during this phase came over the question of land. Current ownership rights would be entrenched, forcing the incoming government to acquire land for resettlement via the willing buyer willing seller principle. Mugabe almost threw in the towel at this point. Not only was this historically skewed, but it would place an intolerable burden on the fiscus. More importantly still, the war had, after all, been fought primarily over the question of stolen lands. This indeed was a fair point, and it was smoothed over only by assurances that the money for land purchases would be made available by Whitehall.

With this out of the way, Mugabe provisionally accepted the terms. It was Bishop Muzorewa, however, who unexpectedly dithered. His difficulty lay in finding consensus in a delegation made up of the disparate elements of his own UANC, Ndabaningi Sithole's chapter of ZANU, Chief Kayisa Ndweni's United Federal Party and, of course, the Rhodesian Front.

Muzorewa might have achieved more if he had not been so obviously overawed by Mugabe, and perhaps also if he had been able to make practical use of the experience of either Ian Smith or Ndabaningi

Sithole, which he could not since both were politically suspect. Much of the time he had no choice but to depend on Carrington to ensure fair play. However, what he was most guilty of, and in this, he was joined by a good many influential whites, was his willingness to fall in with British assurances that he and they were both on the same side. Neither side wanted a Marxist government in control, and it was believed and hoped that the British would push things in the right direction. Dissension came mainly from the white members of Muzorewa's coalition who voiced concern about the white protection clauses. Driven to despair, Muzorewa issued an ultimatum, and amid much grumbling, seat shifting and threats, he managed to muster an unwilling but broad consensus.

On 3 October, details of the new constitution were published. At this point, Carrington was introduced to Mugabe's favourite tactic, and in a complete volte-face, the Patriotic Front rejected the draft constitution in its entirety, demanding a renegotiation from scratch. Carrington was ready, however, and immediately announced that he would proceed to discuss the transitional arrangements with Muzorewa, with or without the Patriotic Front. The existence of the 'low road' strategy was leaked, and Carrington hinted that he had the full support of the Prime Minister. After some tense moments the ploy worked, and a fortnight later the Patriotic Front gave in and accepted the proposals.

The transitional arrangements always promised to be difficult, and indeed they were. Muzorewa's decision to step down in favour of a British governor was perhaps the moment of highest drama in the Rhodesian camp. Such an event was unprecedented anywhere in Africa, and it cut to the core of the Rhodesian dilemma. Once power had been removed, it could not be reclaimed without renewed process. If the British retook control, they could then impose their own solution, and no one could move forward without a return to legality. Moreover, it goes without saying that the Patriotic Front rejected outright any suggestion that the current unrecognised government should oversee any transition period.

The answer was obvious, and since the weakest link was Muzorewa, Carrington immediately went to work on him, plunging him into an awful quandary. Muzorewa's Government had been in office for barely nine months and had survived that long only because of white support. If he willingly handed over power, how could he return to the people as a strong man? Mugabe was getting his way because he was the strong man, and it

was against him that an election would have to be fought. And yet for the greater good, Muzorewa had no choice. Ken Flower assured him that the wages of his sin would be ignominy when the day inevitably came that the British would betray him. By then it would be too late to speak for himself, and he would go down in history as the yes-man that Smith had known all along that he was, even when Smith for once would have preferred that he was not.

With all this weighing on his mind, Muzorewa allowed himself to be lied to. Carrington warmly assured him that he would be back in Government House in no time. This and similar assurances were far too easily made, and underlined by feverish shuttling between the delegations. Threats, double-dealing and unrecorded commitments were the pontoons that kept the whole circus afloat. A top British official admitted that keeping things together so far had been an enormous con job. “Of course, everyone knows that you are going to be the incoming Prime Minister”, Carrington assured a morbid Bishop, “so you may leave your slippers behind in your office to await your return.”

Smith was more realistic and complained bitterly to Carrington that once Muzorewa had given up office, the chances of him ever retrieving it were almost zero. There was no possibility that he could win an election that included Mugabe and Nkomo. This was not, he was quick to add, because of questions of popularity, but only because of the violence and intimidation already taking place in the countryside.

Carrington disagreed. “My dear Mr Smith”, he replied, in typical Foreign Office language, “I want to assure you that our whole strategy has been formulated to ensure that your prognosis will not eventuate. Quite the reverse. We have no doubt that your next government will be formed by a combination of Muzorewa, Nkomo and Smith. Moreover, should your worst fears materialise with a victory for the external factions, the leader will be Nkomo and not Mugabe.”

Once again Smith might have had something to say about a metropolitan Englishman telling him how things worked in Africa, but that too was a waste of time. He looked to the blacks in his delegation for support but found them psychologically falling in behind Muzorewa. Their weariness in the face of almost unstoppable Patriotic Front momentum deeply saddened Smith, but without authority, he could do nothing but watch in dismay.

Whites wondering what was going on were calmed somewhat by a pledge from Carrington that a kind of promissory note would be drafted that would *secretly* give the Muzorewa government full authority over the election process, and that the Governor would be answerable to this understanding. If the Patriotic Front broke the terms of the ceasefire, and in most quarters this was seen as almost inevitable, Carrington undertook to immediately proscribe the party. Muzorewa and his white cabal would then be back in the driving seat, and they could drive wherever they wanted. When written confirmation of this commitment did not appear, Muzorewa made inquiries, in response to which the British tittered and prevaricated in the expected manner. Of course, it could never *actually* be put in writing, for that would be just too explosive. The Rhodesians would have to rely on a 'gentleman's agreement'.

On 27 October Lieutenant-General Peter Walls appeared at the conference to lend his weight. While the arrival of Rhodesia's top soldier threatened hellfire on any dissidents to the process, Walls also tended to absorb the ritual of British trench diplomacy like a sponge. Carrington invited him to his apartment where, in the relaxed atmosphere of his parlour, he delivered a necessary assurance. If Muzorewa was to step down and power returned to the British, then Walls could take Carrington's word that he would remain in charge of the army, would not be answerable to the Governor and could continue his cross-border operations during the transition period. If any problems occurred with this arrangement, Carrington promised Walls direct access to Margaret Thatcher. Again, nothing in writing and Walls could make of that what he would.

By then dialogue was moving on to the question of ceasefire arrangements. Walls took strength from his interview with Carrington and presented to the Conference the largely unsubdued face of militant white Rhodesia. If Smith was shackled by irrelevance, then Walls was next in line as the white man most to be feared. While he had latterly been forced to admit that without a political settlement Salisbury would soon be threatened, Walls was suddenly offering himself as a coup master in the event of white Rhodesia's future being too severely compromised. When pressed he agreed that a political solution was vital, but reminded his audience that without military might, a political solution was apt to resemble a rout. He also warned that if the Patriotic Front did not tow the line more visibly, and negotiate in a spirit of co-operation, it would be

crushed as an outsider once political and economic normality had returned under Muzorewa.

Until that moment Carrington had almost succeeded in persuading Mugabe to accept that the British Governor would base his transitional government on the existing white-dominated civil and security service. Mugabe, however, was starting to feel insecure and was not about to be outmanoeuvred. He pointed the finger at Carrington and accused him of trying to usher in Muzorewa on the back of an administration biased in his favour. Mugabe demanded that the United Nations be mandated to bring in a peacekeeping force and that the Rhodesian Army be demobilised. To this Carrington simply shook his head. Mugabe's voice then rose an octave. "Unless Lord Carrington relents," he cried, "we will pack our bags and go back to war!" The conference was immediately frozen in breathless anticipation as Walls, Smith and Muzorewa waited in silence. Prayers were spoken that for once Mugabe would be as good as his word.

Balancing on a knife-edge, Mugabe played a doubtful hand that had no great chance of success. He returned to his weary allies in the Frontline States and called for some statement of unequivocal support for a continuation of the war. Both Nyerere and Machel rallied to his side, and the necessary verbiage flowed back to Lancaster House. Mugabe could then stand with his allies behind him and metaphorically raise his fist to the continuation of the war. Obviously, however, the question was not one of who could shout the loudest, for the shouting war had lately been louder than the shooting war, but who would blink first. Neither Carrington nor Mugabe gave any ground until Kenneth Kaunda put in a personal appearance and showed for the first time a crack in the façade of Frontline support. He sat down with Nkomo and Mugabe and listened to a litany of complaints while waiting for his moment to issue a simple message of warning. In both Mozambique and Zambia tolerance for the war had reached its limits. Although this did not mean peace at any price, it also did not mean war at any price.

While this meeting sobered Mugabe, it did not entirely divert him. Kaunda was Nomo's man, not his. Mugabe saw in him a weak character, a lachrymose humanitarian who was not a fit soul to lead an African nation. Mugabe did accept, however, that this was not the right moment to precipitate a split, and compromised sufficiently to see the process moving forward. While he was unable to oust the Rhodesian Security Forces

entirely from their proposed role in the transition process, Mugabe was at least able to gain legal recognition for his own ZANLA army. It was duly inserted in paragraph thirteen of the interim proposals that 'The Patriotic Forces will be required to comply with the directives of the Governor'.

General Walls' gruff comment on this concession was: "If anybody shoots at us we will stop them shooting." If that 'anybody' entertained lingering doubts about the General's earnestness, they would have been disabused by intelligence coming in from Zambia. A series of dramatic SAS penetrations into that country echoed Operation *Uric* in another codenamed Operation *Dice*. *Dice* completely crippled Zambia's transport network by blowing up a series of bridges on the roads from Lusaka to Livingstone, Chirundu and Tanzania. Operations *Cheese* and *Tepid* further destroyed bridges north of Lusaka and effectively severed Zambia's rail and road links with Tanzania. The objective of these attacks was threefold: firstly to send the same stark message to Kaunda as had recently been delivered to Machel, secondly to frustrate preparations for a Russian-Cuban-backed conventional assault on Rhodesia and thirdly to deliver a killing blow to the Zambian economy. On 18 September, the SAS, again with the help of the South African navy and Recces, launched another seaborne raid on Beira, this time with the intention of scuttling the dredger fleet in the harbour mouth. Beira's deep-water harbour depended on working dredgers. Two out of three were sunk, and as a consequence, normal port operations did not recommence for six months. In fact, it is arguable whether they ever did.

Now that an all-party election seemed imminent, Nkomo became anxious to ensure that as many ZIPRA units as possible were infiltrated into Rhodesia. It was vital that he retained the capacity to match Mugabe in proving his axiom that 'one man with a gun is worth a thousand votes'. However, his ability to mobilise was now dramatically arrested by the SAS raids, and he found himself at something of a tactical disadvantage. A month or two later, white Rhodesians realised they hated Mugabe more than they hated Nkomo, whereupon they had cause to regret the latter's failure to muster his forces effectively.

The next bone that Mugabe began to chew on was the issue of practical ceasefire arrangements, expressing outrage at proposals that his forces be maintained in assembly points dotted around the country. Even an amateur military tactician would concede that this placed them at the mercy of the Rhodesian Security Forces which would still have effective control of

the country. An emergency meeting of the Frontline Presidents was convened in Dar-es-Salaam, attended by both Samora Machel and Julius Nyerere. Kaunda, however, stayed away to attend to the ongoing military punishment of his national infrastructure.

Mugabe and Nkomo flew to Dar-es-Salaam to once again put their case to their allies. Again they were sternly warned that while they were not expected to capitulate, it was to be borne in mind that the Frontline leaders wanted an end to the war. Mugabe was soon afterwards marched back to Lancaster House glumly muttering: "We will be going back to London to negotiate."

He and Nkomo returned to the Conference insisting that the Rhodesian Army be confined to its bases before his men would come in from the countryside. Mugabe's obsession with a conspiracy between Muzorewa and Carrington had been replaced by another, that the South Africans were poised to bomb the assembly points if a solution was not to their taste. He now demanded public assurances that South Africa would not interfere in any way in the process, which was, of course, beyond the powers of the British Government to achieve. A ripple of dismay spread through the Foreign Office, and for the first time, Carrington found himself seriously pondering the 'low road' option.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Sonny Ramphal partially diffused the crisis by drafting a declaration that Mugabe grudgingly accepted. It stated that under a British Governor there would be no external interference and that the Rhodesian Security Forces would be placed under precisely the same restrictions as the guerrilla forces. During the transitional phase, law and order would instead be attended to by a 1,200-man Commonwealth Monitoring Force. Mugabe initially accepted this, but then insisted that the statement prohibiting outside involvement specifically mention South Africa. Carrington was unable to comply with this, and the situation reached yet another impasse.

Carrington again let it be known that he was of a mind to continue the Conference without the Patriotic Front, but this time Mugabe dug in his heels. Carrington then conceded, and a dangerous precedent was set. It began to look as though Mugabe was gradually forcing the tide. The ceasefire question was put away for the moment, but that was not the end of it. The South African issue, regarding wording a declaration, was simply a rhetorical point. Mugabe now moved to push for more substantive gains.

In the meantime, a Governor had been selected in the form of Lord Christopher Soames. Much of Soames will be heard later, but for the present, he was sent to take up office in Salisbury on 11 December 1979, sometime before negotiations in London were completed. To send out a Governor with little or no constitutional, military or executive control was a bold if somewhat desperate move on Carrington's part, to try and force the pace of the conference. Edson Zvobgo put the issue in perspective by musing in public that it appeared the Patriotic Front was now at war with Britain. This indeed was the risk if things fell apart after the date of Soames' occupation of Government House.

This, however, did not stop Carrington from continuing to heap on the pressure. He unveiled plans for a ceasefire which decreed that the Rhodesian Army was to have forty-seven operational bases and the Patriotic Front just fourteen. This in itself did not produce the outcry, however. That came from the fact that neither ZIPRA nor ZANLA was to be given an assembly point within the white farming areas of the central watershed, or in the economic heartland of the country. Therein lay the seeds of the biggest crisis of the negotiations so far.

For Mugabe, the moment had at last arrived when he could seize the moral high ground and retreat from the conference with a justifiable grievance. He insisted that this dispensation would have a crucially adverse psychological effect on his men. Fighters moving towards the assembly points situated on the fringes would be seen as evacuating the vital strategic zone, which would give the impression of defeat. This he could not accept. It was also probably fair to say that neither he nor his military command could realistically have persuaded ZANLA to leave an area they had fought for and held for so long. Unspoken was the fact that isolated assembly points would limit guerrilla access to the population, and that would, in turn, limit their ability to intimidate. There was no conceivable way that the Rhodesians and Mugabe were going to see eye-to-eye on this point.

The impression that Carrington might have lost his grip was then abruptly stripped away. He allowed the uproar to wash over him and proceeded to name Saturday 15 December as the deadline for acceptance of the terms of the ceasefire. After that, the Conference would wrap up with or without the Patriotic Front, and thus the stage was set for yet another round of brinkmanship. On the Friday before the deadline, Zvobgo called a press

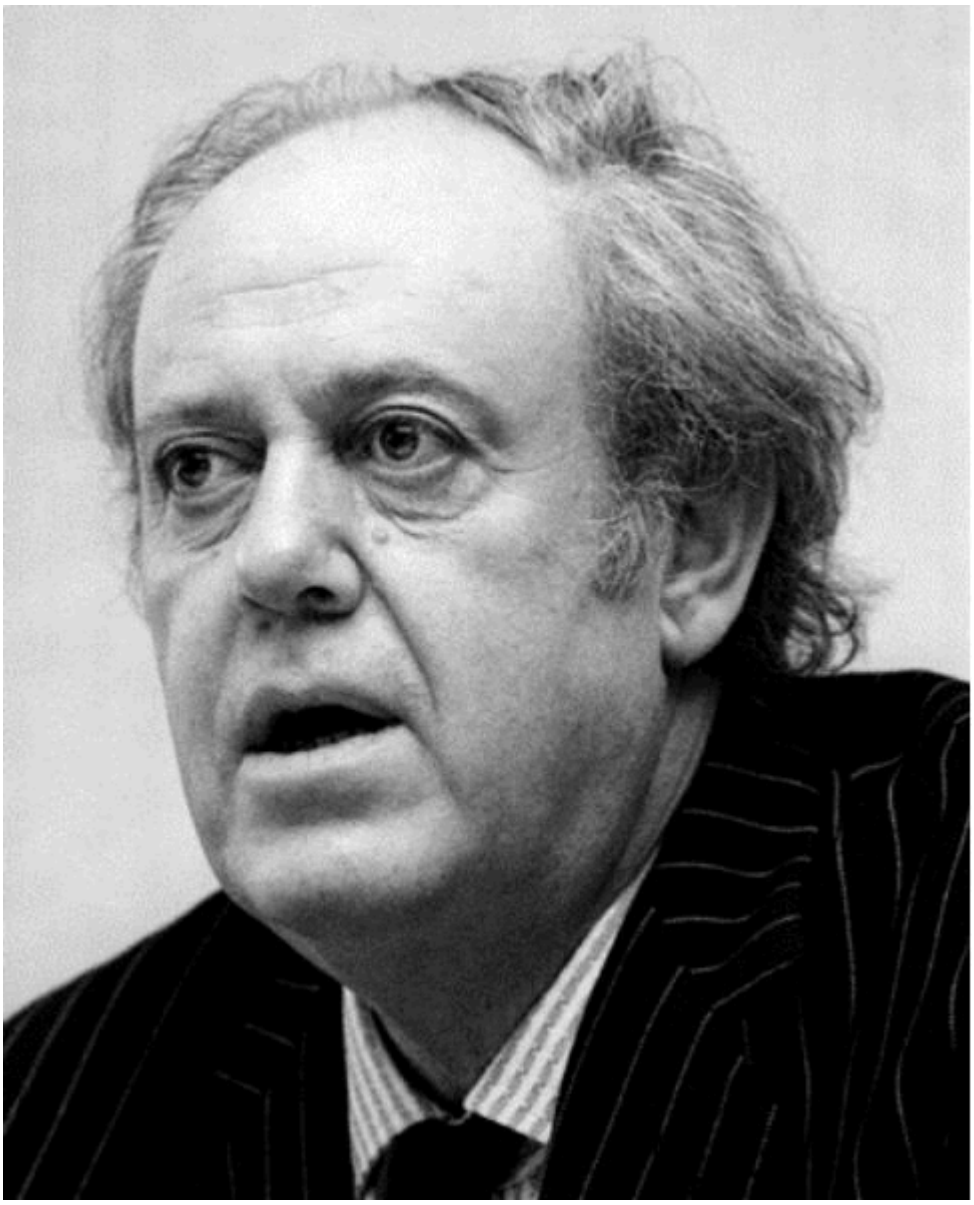
conference at which he declared in the most animated terms that Carrington could go to hell.

"The answer is a clear and eloquent 'No' to Carrington. The answer is 'No' and he and his Governor can go hang."

As the deadline arrived, Mugabe apologised for his press secretary's excesses, but reiterated that the answer was 'No'. Carrington sighed and flew to Washington with Margaret Thatcher for an official visit, leaving the situation temporarily in hiatus. He was confident, however, that on his return he would find Mugabe in agreement.

Carrington was almost ready to reveal his hand, it was merely necessary for Mugabe to walk into the trap. For fifteen weeks he had sat and endured the boorish behaviour of Zvobgo, the simpering coercion of Nkomo, the hand rubbing and indecisive pleas from a tearful and overwrought Muzorewa, the angry exhortations of Smith and the cold and devious manipulations of Mugabe. Carrington, however, knew one man at least who had the courage and honesty to go so far and no further. Before he left for Washington, he put a telephone call through to Maputo and through an interpreter warned Samora Michel that his protégé had just packed up and was leaving town. It was his intention to fly to the United States to gain support for a continuation of the war. That, for all intents and purposes, would be the end of the Lancaster House Conference. Carrington may or may not have also made the point to Machel that since a British Governor was resident in Salisbury, if Mugabe went back to war, he would, in turn, drag Mozambique into a war with Britain. In the light of current entente, how did this sound in Maputo?

Samora Machel was appalled. Mugabe had gambled that a fait accompli based on such unbearable provocation would force the Mozambican President to grasp the nettle. No such thing. Machel immediately dispatched his London Ambassador to Heathrow where Mugabe was narrowly intercepted. It was made abundantly clear to the ZANU leader that if he left the Conference at this point, he could expect a comfortable villa in Mozambique, but no more. Seeing the light, Mugabe cancelled his flight and returned in a state of utter abjection to his London hotel. A few days later, on 21 December, after a total of forty-seven plenary sessions, the Lancaster House Agreement was signed.



Lord Christopher Soames

27
See! – We Told You So

For Satan so loved Zimbabwe, he gave his only begotten son, Mugabe, that whoever follows him shall have everlasting poverty – ***Times*** **UK**

Although Smith did not attend the signing ceremony, the Rhodesian Front held a caucus meeting and made the rather academic decision to accept the terms of the Lancaster House Agreement. Most whites, although it was a less than perfect solution, felt a significant weight of anxiety lift from their hearts. Most adopted a wait and see attitude and got on with their day-to-day lives. A general understanding prevailed, fuelled by rumour, hope, denial and all the other human traits of survival, that Mugabe was unlikely to win an outright majority, and even if he did there was still the army to take care of any unpleasant surprises.

There was also a tendency to believe British assurances that even the merest hint of foul play would result in the banning of the guilty party. Guerrillas would be confined to assembly points and could do no damage, besides which white Rhodesians were tending now to look upon Nkomo in a more friendly light. Even if the Bishop failed to achieve his expected majority, a coalition government would be formed with Nkomo that would at all costs exclude Mugabe.

Mugabe, of course, had other plans. Before the ink on the agreement was dry, hundreds, indeed thousands of ZANLA guerrillas were channelled into the country in contravention of the ceasefire agreement. Nkomo was trying to do the same, but he was hampered by Rhodesian action along the Zambezi River. Besides this, Nkomo tended to follow the advice of his ubiquitous Russian military advisors in allowing his forces to build up their conventional capacity outside Rhodesia. He had therefore limited the number of his military personnel actually deployed into Rhodesia that now left him at a distinct disadvantage.

Mugabe, as usual, was prepared to gamble. This time he was betting that the British would not provoke a political incident by appearing to be too eager to ban his party. Although Carrington had scored a coup at Lancaster House, he had in doing so learned that Mugabe was a dangerous man. Proscribing ZANU would not be easy since absolute proof of impropriety was almost impossible to obtain. Two other factors also tended

to work in Mugabe's favour. The first of these was the removal from the scene of a very unlikely moderate in the form of Josiah Tongogara.

Tongogara had been a perennial in the liberation process since the early 1970s. While his fortunes had ebbed and flowed, he remained a dark horse in the eyes of Rhodesian whites. It came as a pleasant surprise then, to among others General Walls and Ian Smith, when at Lancaster House a moderate side to Tongogara's nature was revealed. The three at different times held a series of pleasant conversations which were, in fact, the only instances of social intercourse that were attempted across the ideological divide. Smith was reminded of old times when Tongogara enquired after the health of his mother Agnes. Agnes Smith employed a young Josiah Tongogara as a garden hand when the guerrilla leader was still a boy. Tongogara remembered the kind treatment he had received at the hands of the old lady, and this naturally softened Smith's inherent suspicion of one of Rhodesia's primary enemies. As an aside to this story, and after Tongogara's death, Smith received a curious message from 'some Portuguese chap' in Maputo wondering how he could ship a parcel of prawns to Smith's mother. This turned out to be a gift from Tongogara. Carrington, it must be said, also found Tongogara a vital moderating force.

Tongogara's position on the future was that unity between ZANU and ZAPU was essential for post-independence reconstruction. Without a strong and united nationalist front, a free Zimbabwe would immediately split along tribal lines. An expensive and bloody equalisation would then be needed before the new nation could grow. To Mugabe such sentimentality was irrelevant, and he had no such thing in mind. He suffered no particular fear of equalisation, besides which the Patriotic Front was largely a spent force, and Nkomo no man to share power with. Mugabe wanted sole authority, and he wanted a one-party state. In Africa, populations always defer to the 'big man', and big men do not share power. Most worrying about Tongogara was that he took the whole Lancaster House business far too seriously. Left to him, ZANLA forces would have complied with the ceasefire terms and reported to their respective assembly points. Violence and political intimidation would then have been checked, which would, of course, have seriously inconvenienced Mugabe's plans.

Tongogara died in a car accident while travelling up the main road from Maputo to Beira late on Christmas Eve. He was on his way north to brief the various camp commanders on the new rules of play. Rex Nhongo

later claimed in an election speech that Tongogara had been murdered because he favoured the ceasefire and opposed Mugabe, but the truth of this assertion has never been proven. Officially Tongogara's death was ruled an accident, a verdict that has been widely supported. Most recently, Edgar Tekere, who in later years was no particular friend of Mugabe's, and who exposed many other controversial claims, stated categorically that Mugabe was not involved.

The official version states that Tongogara was driving a Land Rover north on a moonless night, and while attempting to overtake a lorry on the right-hand side, his vehicle hit the back of a second lorry that was displaying no rear lights. Gauging the condition of Mozambique's roads and the general standards of vehicle maintenance at this time, there is nothing implausible in this story. ZANU, however, set alarm bells ringing when it released an undertakers report without autopsy results or any supporting pictures, stating that Tongogara's injuries were consistent with a car accident. In the meantime, an eyewitness claimed to have seen Tongogara shot three times and then bludgeoned with an axe so that his injuries might seem consistent with a car accident. An ex-member of the law and order section of the BSAP was later able to see a photograph of the body and claimed to be able to identify three bullet holes. Both the Soviet and US Ambassadors to Zambia declared the death to be an inside job. Why the British did not insist on a proper autopsy probably had much to do with their unwillingness to provoke any histrionics, and nor to interfere in any way with the nominally smooth progress of the elections.

Whatever might have been the truth, Tongogara's death paved the way for Rex Nhongo, a far less scrupulous man than he, to assume the military leadership of ZANLA. This, in turn, opened the way for the misuse of the armed forces that in the end influenced to no small degree the outcome of the election.

The second thing that worked in Mugabe's favour was that the Englishman he was now in direct conflict with was not the shrewd and manipulative Lord Carrington, but a much more avuncular character in the form of British Governor Lord Christopher Soames. Soames was a corpulent and amiable member of the British Parliament, and one time War Secretary when no war existed. He had otherwise served in such government portfolios as Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and more congenially as British Ambassador to France. He had, however, served no

school that could teach him how to grapple with Africa's fiercest intellectual warrior.

It can be said of Soames, however, that he was at least pragmatic. From the moment that he arrived in the country, he was assailed by complaints from all the moderate parties that the extremists, and ZANU in particular, had already begun the process of black politicisation with their customary brutality. Soames shrugged his shoulders when asked by the press what he intended to do about it: "I want to see the freest, fairest elections possible in this country," he said, "but intimidation is rife, and I've got to do everything I can to minimise this." The Governor then went on to illustrate his predicament with perhaps the most memorable quote of the entire Rhodesian saga. "You must remember," he said, "this is Africa. This isn't Little Puddleton-on-the-Marsh, and they behave differently here. They think nothing of sticking tent poles up each other's whatnot and doing filthy, beastly things to each other. It does happen, I'm afraid. It's a very wild thing, an [African] election."

Wild indeed. Soames was forced into breaking the terms of the ceasefire agreement himself when he approved the redeployment of the Rhodesian Security Forces along the eastern border, in a forlorn attempt to try and stem the inflow of ZANLA combatants. This was undeniably forlorn since, in eight years of war, the storied Rhodesian Army had failed to achieve just that. Meanwhile, as hundreds of guerrillas slipped in through the back door, others came in through the front. On Boxing Day 1980, the first of the bona fide returnees began to make their way home. Thousands of cheering blacks gathered at Salisbury Airport to welcome back eighty-two ZANLA and ZIPRA military commanders. Rex Nhongo stepped onto the tarmac and walked towards the terminal hand in hand with senior ZIPRA Commander Lookout Msuku. A fortnight later Simon Muzenda, Mugabe's Deputy in the newly named ZANU Patriotic Front, or ZANU-PF, arrived at the airport at the head of a group of 108 party officials. These, of course, included a grinning and slightly inebriated Edison Zvobgo.

A few days later Joshua Nkomo landed in the company of a girl's choir and was promptly airlifted from the tarmac to a welcoming rally in Highfields. There, a huge crowd, including thousands of ZAPU supporters specially bussed in from Bulawayo, greeted him. The elephantine ZAPU leader then launched into an attack on Mugabe and ZANU for failing to agree to run with him in the election. He triumphantly claimed the name

Patriot Front for himself, and ZAPU was now PF ZAPU. Nkomo also made a point of calling on Ian Smith with whom he discussed the possibility of a coalition government.

Smith had by then been fully briefed on the intimidation underway in the countryside and was more or less resigned to the fact that Mugabe was heading towards an outright majority. As he wrote later in his biography: "…those poor, defenceless, confused people had got the message – did they want to remain alive or not?" Smith did approach General Walls to press him to reveal exactly what plans he had in the event of a whitewash, but Walls was reluctant to divulge much, although he was prepared to concede, truthfully or otherwise, that in the final event he did not intend to allow Mugabe to win.

In those final days, it became the turn of Salisbury's whites to gather in numbers at the airport to witness the novel sight of RAF Hercules transporters and American Lockheed C141 Starlifters arriving with the 1,200 men of the Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Force. Rhodesian whites were then treated to the even more curious sight of a flood of foreign troops in their country. These were mainly from the United Kingdom and the dominions, and they were welcomed into the country without reservation. Welcome also was the handful of black Englishmen, many of whom were invited to private homes just for the novelty of hearing them speak Brummy, Geordie or Cockney. It was uniquely amusing for whites to observe the astonishment on the faces of the black cooks and houseboys who served up meals to other black men sitting in the living room, sharing a beer and chatting about England with the *Baas*.

As these brief and cordial exchanges took place, the Monitoring process itself slipped into gear. Roughly 500 of the CFMF troops were deployed into the countryside to take up positions at the various assembly points. The remainder, acting in staff and liaison capacities, settled into hotels and motels in the various smaller centres around the country. ZANLA and ZIPRA in the meantime established their operational headquarters at the Teacher Training College Hostel attached to the University in Mount Pleasant. The Commonwealth Monitoring Force Commander, Major-General John Acland, set up his Salisbury headquarter at Morgan High School in Arcadia.

Guerrilla entry into the assembly points was initially slow, due to the obvious and not unjustified suspicion of an attack. Rhodesian territorial

units were temporarily suspended while the RLI and other regulars were confined to their operational bases. From there they pondered the gathering of their once elusive enemies into easily containable groups, and do doubt many would have taken no persuasion at all to gather their weapons and move in to finish the job.

In the end, the Governor gave the guerrillas a deadline of 2 January to assemble. By that date only about 12,000 had actually done so, meaning that the majority were still at large. Soames was conscious that the temptation to strike might overwhelm the middle-level command of the Rhodesian Army since it would be relatively easy to mobilise and move in rapidly to obliterate the assembly points. While officially Soames declined to extend the deadline, it was reasonably decided that the assembly points should remain open to accept incoming guerrillas for a further two days. By that time an estimated 18,000 were held in camps, which, according to the two guerrilla Commanders, Rex Nhongo and Lookout Msuku, accounted for the majority.

Rex Nhongo assiduously denied Rhodesian claims that the bulk of assembly point arrivals were *mujibas* wielding unserviceable weaponry dug up from old arms caches. Edison Zvobgo was prepared years later to be more candid. He was interviewed for a Granada Television production dealing with the end of the British Empire in which he admitted:

"But when we were asked to declare how many guerrillas we had, we chose to declare 20,000. If everybody thought we had 8,000, and we were willing to deliver 20,000, then clearly we didn't have anybody else left. In fact, we had a very large army left, who remained as political commissars in the country simply to ensure that we would win the election."

If Soames was prepared to overlook some of these more blatant breaches of the ceasefire, he left it to his spokesman Nicholas Fenn to express official Government House dismay. Fenn concluded that there had been "…substitution by young thugs and others of guerrillas to intimidate the rural population." In this, Fenn was absolutely correct, for Commonwealth monitoring personnel had been given instructions to classify anybody, regardless of age or sex, who was carrying a weapon of any sort as a combatant. Local youth and *mujibas* were without a doubt given odds and ends of weaponry and sent into the camps posing as trained

guerrillas. This left thousands of fighters at liberty in the countryside to politicise and campaign for ZANU.

As far as methods of intimidation went, however, much of the trench work had already been done. Many tribesmen had by then died horrible deaths in the name of unity and the fact that this fate awaited sell-outs needed no reinforcement. Weapons were cashed in plain sight of local tribesmen who needed no reminder of how bad it could get if the line was not towed. The most persuasive threat was that if ZANU did not win the election, it would take the country back to war. Unsophisticated peasants could not be expected to read the wider dynamics and see that this was a lie. What they believed was what they saw, and what they saw was evidence of ZANLA force. There was no sign of the Rhodesian Army, which implied nationalist victory, as indeed it probably was.

In the face of all of this, there was very little that either Soames or Nicholas Fenn could do. Soames had no choice but to rely on the Rhodesian Security Forces to maintain order in the country, which he did with no direct control over their deployment. The only force that he had under his direct control was the Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Force, which numbered only 1,200 men. Being lightly armed it had little chance of imposing any authority on a hostile situation in a tempered war zone. It was, as its name implied, a force conceived not to enforce the ceasefire but merely to monitor it.

Soames was also not unaware that it would be almost impossible to completely proscribe ZANU-PF. He was prepared to reprimand the party, but beyond that, there was little that he could do. ZANU was not permitted to import its vehicles or its more militant campaign literature, while permission was withheld briefly for Mugabe to return to Rhodesia. The ostensible reason for this fluctuated between Mugabe's refusal to release many of his political prisoners still held without trial in Mozambique and the fact that his dates would clash with other political rallies already being held in the townships.

Mugabe, of course, could see this all for what it was and took comfort from the implications of immunity. However, he narrowly avoided an assassination attempt devised by Special Branch Selous Scouts when he finally left Maputo on the morning of 27 January 1980. A car packed with P4 plastic explosives was rigged in South Africa by South African Special Forces engineers and driven north where it was parked along the main road

to Maputo airport. A short distance away was parked a second vehicle with two Selous Scouts operators seated ready to detonate the charge as Mugabe's motorcade passed by. When it became clear that something had gone wrong, the vehicle was reclaimed by South African recce operators and driven back home. Mugabe had been tipped off, perhaps again by Ken Flower, and he and 100 ZANU-PF officials were smuggled to the airport by a different route. Mugabe, his wife Sally and his entourage left Maputo on time on a Mozambique nation carrier flight, and a short while later landed at Salisbury Airport.

Having abandoned his London bomb plot, Alan Brice, needless to say, was in the thick of things again. The moment that he returned to Salisbury from London he was charged with devising a backup plan in case the Maputo car bomb plot failed. His idea was simply to rig up a series of Russian TM46 anti-tank mines along the airport road, which would be command detonated from a hiding place in the bush nearby. The plan was, however, again called off without explanation.

Soames had, in the meantime, banned public demonstrations, so, after suffering a certain amount of abuse and rough handling by junior airport officials, Mugabe immediately made his way to Highfields, where the first organised ZANU mass rally was held. This was by far the largest single gathering of human beings in the history of Rhodesia to date. The city's black population massed to meet the man most knew little about, but who claimed to be the only authentic liberator of Zimbabwe. Salisbury's whites remained largely oblivious to the phenomenon until the following morning when an aerial photograph of the event was splashed across the front page of the *Rhodesia Herald*. It showed a sea of humanity over 250,000 strong, stronger than the entire white population of the country, overflowing the stadium and spilling out onto the streets of Highfield. Although this was to be the first of many such displays, for a debut performance, it was as impressive as it was sobering. It was a buoyant Mugabe who then made his way to Government House to acquaint himself with the Governor.

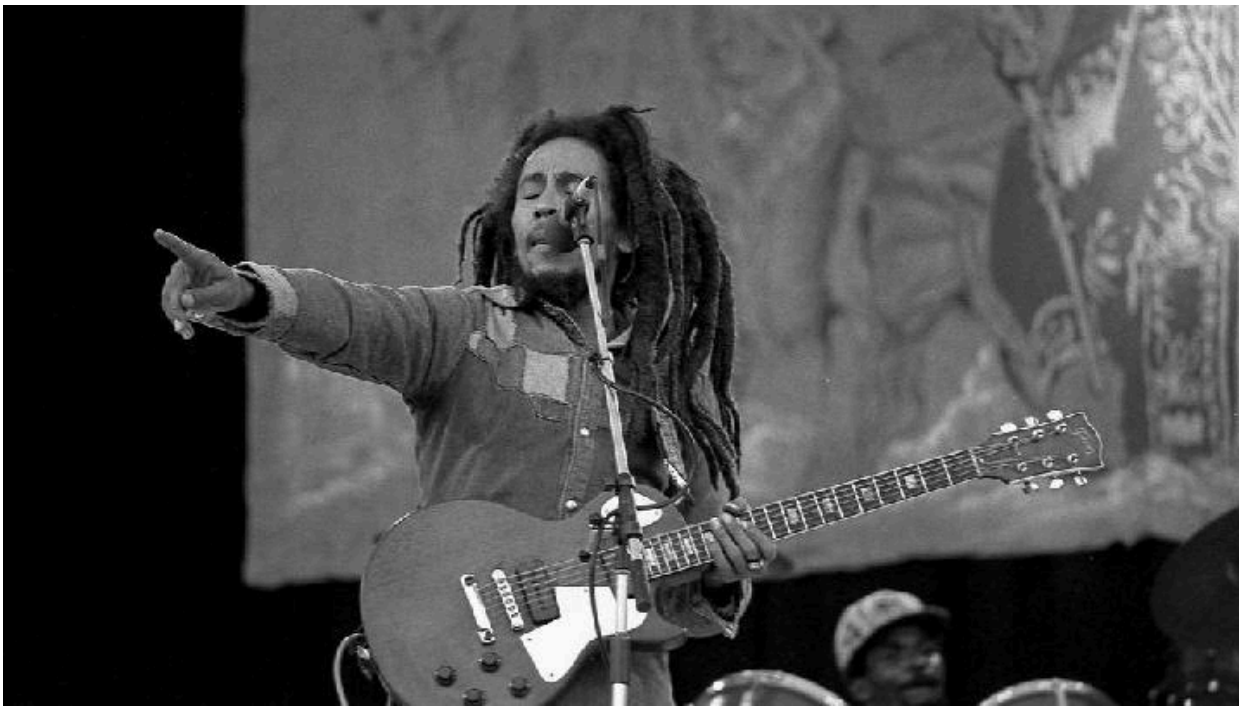
There Mugabe was confronted by a dossier of evidence detailing ZANU PF's ongoing breaches of the ceasefire code. Mugabe denied nothing, but instead attacked Soames for his redeployment of the Security Forces, equally in contravention of the ceasefire protocol, and the fact that Sithole and Muzorewa's Auxiliaries appeared to be able to move freely

around the country while his men were contained. To this, Soames responded as best he could, within the rough parameters of African politics. On 5 February, he issued an ordinance that gave his office the power to ban political parties from campaigning in all or part of the country. He was also empowered to disenfranchise a whole district if he judged political intimidation to have reached a level where a free and fair election was impossible.

In practical terms, of course, Soames had no chance whatsoever of effectively applying this authority, and Mugabe threatened to send ZANLA back to war if any level of ban was applied to his party. Thatcher and Carrington had by then washed their hands of the future, and Mugabe could indulge himself in these sorts of threats without any particular fear. He therefore loudly condemned Soames as being the 'chief violator', harkening back to Lancaster House with withering accusations that the Governor was tilting the playing field in favour of his opponents. Soames, as might be expected, wilted under the sheer force of these exchanges, and although he made one or two cursory gestures, such as banning ZANU PF activity in some areas of the southeast, he made no serious attempt to exclude ZANU PF in any area. This left Mugabe confident that so long as a vote was permitted, it would go to him. He allowed his men to continue the process of politicisation regardless of the persistent and sullen cries of foul from his competitors.

General Peter Walls and Ken Flower were in the meantime invited to visit Maputo by FRELIMO in order to discuss their 'new relationship'. It was a surreal moment for both men who had presided over a most destructive campaign of attacks against Mozambique for many years. Both wondered, not unreasonably, whether they were walking into a trap. However, they were treated well, and while Walls discussed questions of military interest with his counterparts, Flower was urged by Joaquim Chissano, ex-transitional leader and current Mozambique Foreign Minister, to do what he could promote Mugabe as the heir apparent in Zimbabwe. Chissano urged Flower to avoid mistakes made in Mozambique where the white community had been lost to the immediate detriment of the economy. He also asked that CIO support for the infamous MNR be stopped. This did in fact occur, and it was Flower himself who was largely responsible for the handover of the organisation to the South Africans.

Meanwhile, back in Salisbury, and as the election campaign was drawing to a close, Muzorewa recognised the likely course of events and sought counsel from Flower on the advisability of applying more pressure on Lord Soames to ban ZANU ahead of the ballot. Flower was resigned, however. The election, he told the Bishop, had already taken on a life of its own, and besides that, the Frontline States would never countenance any effort at this late stage to cut ZANU out of the process. Flower felt that the British would rather see the worst result than no result at all. Muzorewa then tried to put pressure on members of ComOps to petition the Governor to postpone the election, by force if necessary, but Walls, understandably, refused to sanction force. Like Flower, he believed that it was by then too late, and matters must now be allowed to take their own course.



Bob Marley Performing 'Zimbabwe'

28
The End

Intimidation was not confined to any one faction, but the activities of Mugabe's followers, in particular, led to considerable revulsion – **Lord Peter Carrington**

Anger and heartbreak tended to find sustenance in alcohol and commiseration. In bars, clubs and messes all over Rhodesia, idle servicemen gathered to contemplate an uncertain future. Men could take pride in the fact that, although weakened, the Rhodesian Army stood undefeated on the battlefield. Reckless thoughts were aired, and schemes for coups and takeovers considered, but I the end, discipline held. This, however, did not limit or constrain the actions of some individuals, and one or two members of the Selous Scouts, who were by then thoroughly accustomed to operating beyond recall.

On Sunday 3 February 1980, an attack was mounted against a bus carrying black wedding guests from Umtali to Salisbury. It had somehow been established that the passengers were UANC supporters. A Selous Scouts call-sign of seven operators mounted the attack, which was carefully planned to mimic a typical ZANLA operation. To complete the deception, various bits of ZANLA military equipment garnished the scene as well as the body of a recently killed ZANLA guerrilla suitably roughed up to appear as if he had accidentally caught the back blast of an RPG-7 rocket. A toothbrush and toothpaste and a box of matches of the sort issued to the Australian Monitoring Force were planted to implicate ZANLA cadres camped at a nearby assembly point. The attack was pressed home in the classic guerrilla ambush style, using RPG-7 rocket launchers and AK47s. The driver was killed in the opening fusillade, causing the bus to veer off the road and overturn. A total of sixteen passengers were killed, and at least twenty-five transported by ambulance to Rusape hospital. Others were shuttled by private vehicles.

ComOps promptly issued a statement blaming ZANLA guerrillas for the attack. Lord Soames did not concur, commenting that there was insufficient evidence to determine who exactly was to blame. The commander of the Monitoring Force in the *Thrasher* area supplied a suitably general, but none the less stinging attack, describing the assault as

the worst violation since the ceasefire was declared on 28 December. All others paled into insignificance. “It raised the question of the mentality of people who do this sort of thing.”

On Valentines Day 1980, a rash of unexplained bombings occurred in the capital. Five bombs were manufactured to deliberately poor standards and placed at the doors of a selection of churches throughout the capital. This was no doubt done to deliver the impression that this was what could be expected in the future under a government of heathen communists. One of the bombs was designed not to detonate, in order, one might suppose, that investigators could examine it and discover the communist origins of the explosives and other materials. To limit any evidence of Security Force involvement, four teams were instructed to use their own private vehicles to conduct the operation. A passer-by observed two black Selous Scouts operatives sitting in a Renault twelve sedan with the interior lights on. The pair appeared to be fiddling with something between them when the car was suddenly demolished in a massive explosion.

By means of the vehicle’s registration book and a chequebook found in the glove compartment, it was not difficult to trace the origin of the bomb. The occupants were exposed as Selous Scouts operators, which left ComOps in rather a quandary. The deaths were made public in a simple Security Force communiqué that offered just two paragraphs of bland disinformation. In 2003, Special Branch Selous Scouts Commander Mac McGuinness denied any ComOps involvement and, in an interview, claimed that the attacks were carried out by ‘out of step’ Selous Scouts with their own agenda.

These ‘out of step’ elements continued to be active throughout the election campaign. On 22 February, a much more sophisticated operation was conducted involving the circulation of a counterfeit edition of the popular black newspaper *MOTO*. The front page of an authentic looking forgery contained a scurrilous personal attack on Robert Mugabe. “Who is Robert Mugabe?” the opening sentence asked. “Is he an enlightened, progressive Christian leader of a people seeking their destiny, or is he a ruthless, power-hungry Marxist heathen?” It certainly was a fair question but was spoilt further on in the article by an obviously bogus ‘Psychological Analyst’, which took the form of a rather dubious personal attack.

A few days later a small group of Selous Scouts, in the company of members of the South African Special Forces, broke into the Gwelo

premises of Mambo Press and rigged up a large explosive device beside the printing press. Various additions to the crime scene were made to give the impression that it was a ZANLA operation, presumably to avenge the published attack on their chief. Another recent ZANLA kill was signed out of the morgue and planted on the scene with a Tokarev pistol slipped into his pocket. The facility was completely destroyed in the ensuing blast, and when a member of Gwelo CID arrived at 03h30, he found the remains of the planted corpse. To his astonishment, however, he also found the dismembered remains of a white man who, even more curiously, had South African notes and coins in his pocket.

In the meanwhile, Robert Mugabe suffered such a barrage of actual or proposed attempts on his life during those tense weeks that a fake edition of *MOTO* with a colourful psychological analysis must have seemed quite trivial, and it was. Many people had an interest in seeing Mugabe dead, and between the time he left Maputo for a triumphant arrival in Salisbury and receiving the laurels of Zimbabwe's first Prime Minister, he experienced quite a few narrow escapes.

Alan Brice was still feverishly at work, and his next plan had all the hallmarks of his unique resourcefulness. Mugabe acquired a property on Quorn Avenue in the upmarket suburb of Mount Pleasant where he took up residence on his return to Rhodesia. An underground storm drain running along the front of the property could be entered through a manhole, and here Brice intended to plant fifty kilograms of high explosive to be detonated by remote means as Mugabe made for his front door. Again the plan was inexplicably cancelled and, for the third time, Mugabe narrowly escaped a mortal brush with the deadly CIO assassin.

In the early hours of 7 February, a hand grenade was tossed over the wall of Mugabe's property, but no one was injured. A little earlier two RPG-7 rockets were more successfully fired into the bedroom of Kumbirai Kangayi, ZANU-PF's Secretary for Welfare and Transport, seriously injuring him, although there was no indication of who was behind either of these two attacks.

Another scheme of a much more ambitious nature was under consideration in Bulawayo. This was to be a combined SAS-Selous Scouts operation focused on a ZANU-PF rally that Mugabe was scheduled to address on 9 February. The plan had two fall-back phases in case the initial attack failed. The opening play was to position a former Selous Scouts

captain in an ambulance at the Bulawayo airport armed with a Soviet surface-to-air missile, which would easily be able to bring down the aircraft carrying Mugabe and his entourage. Should this fail, phase two would involve positioning a ten-man SAS team to ambush Mugabe's motorcade as it left the airport. If this also failed, phase three required a black Scouts operator with forged *Drum* magazine press credentials to place a microphone packed with ball bearings and explosives on the podium where Mugabe would speak. Mugabe was again tipped off that something was afoot and cancelled the rally.

The following day, Mugabe addressed another rally in the Mucheke Township of Fort Victoria. At 13h55 he left the venue and joined a three-vehicle convoy heading for the local airport from where he was to fly back to Salisbury. A small SAS team planted an explosive charge under a culvert on the access road leading to the airport. The charge, however, detonated under the wrong vehicle, and again Mugabe survived.

These attacks were loosely related to a more complex Security Force operation formulated to counter the possibility of Mugabe gaining an outright majority. The plan was in two parts codenamed Operation *Hectic* and Operation *Quartz*. The former was the direct attempt to remove Mugabe by assassination, the latter to neutralise his power in the event of his gaining a significant electoral majority. While this was not thought to be particularly likely, it was nonetheless tacitly agreed between the British and the Rhodesians that such a result was undesirable. Far more acceptable to all would be a moderate coalition of Muzorewa, Sithole and Nkomo. Senior British Foreign Office and MI6 representatives assured Superintendent Mac McGuinness that, if by happenstance Mugabe did emerge with an outright majority, Soames would be primed in advance to declare voting in certain areas null and void.

Meetings to establish all this were held in Rhodesia as the Constitutional Conference in Lancaster House was underway. It was correctly assumed by everybody that a settlement was imminent, and that an all-party election would follow. It was also taken for granted that electioneering would become violent and that both the warring nationalist parties would make use of voter intimidation to influence the poll. A senior MI6 operator suggested that a complete dossier of all reports on intimidation should be compiled to assist the Governor, and should he be required to ban one or other of the political parties. To jump-start the

process, Selous Scouts were ordered to commence pseudo operations to make it appear that guerrilla groups had already begun to harass the rural population. Although it never happened, the Scouts were authorised to kill members of the Commonwealth Monitoring Force if it could be established that this would advance the deception.

If it became necessary to ban Mugabe from the election, or if he lost the poll to one of his rivals, there seemed little doubt that he would pull his forces out of their camps and send them back to war. Since he was most likely to issue the necessary commands on publication of the election result, the ZANLA assembly points were to be annihilated just prior to this. Since Nkomo would be a coalition partner, ZIPRA camps were to be spared as far as possible. SAS and RLI ground forces would share the task of destroying ten ZANLA assembly points scattered around the country, supported by the usual Air Force arsenal, that would itself be backed up by the possible deployment of South African Mirages and Canberra bombers. At the same time, the SAS, supported by the Armoured Car Regiment, would attack ZANLA's Salisbury headquarters as well as the homes of all the main ZANU-PF officials. Naturally, Mugabe's Mount Pleasant Home and Simon Muzenda's home in Highlands topped the list. A second strike force would move against the Patriotic Front's Military HQ contained within the grounds of the University of Rhodesia. Troops would also be positioned to strike the main ZANU-PF administrative HQ at the Medical Arts Centre in Highlands. The code word for the operation was *Quartz*.

As polling for the common roll got underway, the SAS teams positioned around the capital waited for the signal to launch their attacks. Across the country, an astounding 2,702,275 people, ninety-three per cent of those eligible, queued up to cast their votes. Throughout the capital, and indeed everywhere in the country, voting was conducted in an atmosphere of orderly calm. At each polling booth, a pair of British policemen stood in the sunshine and kept an eye on the crowd. They were an incongruous sight in their shirtsleeves and distinctive service helmets, and benignly ignorant of the dark undertow of symbolism and intimidation that followed the voters even to the polls.

As the supernatural had been an early medium of the fighter-civilian bond, it also reared its head in the election campaign. ZANLA fighters claimed that ZANU-PF had an 'evil eye' that would betray traitors when the day came to vote, and everybody knew what a traitor could expect. ZANU-

PF's campaigners also claimed to have a 'black box', supplied by the Romanians, that could identify whose cross had been placed where. Credulous tribesmen believed what they were told, and even if they did not, they gave the stories the benefit of the doubt.

On 2 March, in the meanwhile, two days before the first results were due, Robert Mugabe and twenty-eight members of his Central Committee flew to Maputo for a weekend visit. The SAS's Kabrit Barracks was located adjacent to Salisbury Airport, and it was planned that a surface-to-air missile would be fired from there to bring down Mugabe's aircraft. The plan apparently failed because of the unwillingness of the gunner to be responsible for the deaths of crew and other civilians on the same flight.

On 4 March, military units waiting at various points around the country gathered around transistor radios and listened as Registrar-General Eric Pope-Symonds began to read out the preliminary election results, and the news was bad. Out of the eighty African seats, Mugabe won fifty-seven, Nkomo twenty and Muzorewa three. Sithole, Chirau and Ndweni won none at all. Twenty seats were reserved for whites. Mugabe had won his outright majority. Knuckles turned white as men closed their eyes and prayed for one word: *Quartz*! Even at that stage, it was not too late. As the news began to sink in, however, most came to accept that the order would not be coming. It soon became clear that all things being equal, Mugabe would form the next government.

Several theories exist regarding the demise of *Operation Quartz*. It has been suggested that Walls refused to give the order upon realising that Mugabe's electoral victory was simply too great. Perhaps it was never planned to implement *Quartz* at all. Uniting the entire military in a single plot to subvert the process might simply have been intended to prevent individuals or middle-ranking officers from taking matters into their own hands. If that had happened, her Majesty would have been at war in Rhodesia before the Governor had a chance to leap onto a homeward-bound British aircraft.

It was not long after this that General Walls and almost the entire membership of ComOps visited Robert Mugabe and offered their allegiance to the new government. In due course Walls accepted the position of Commander of the new Zimbabwe National Army. In a later interview, Chief Superintendent Mac McGuinness denied any knowledge of the planning and arrangements for Operation *Quartz*. This would appear to

vindicate ComOps and indicate that rogue elements within the security services and the Selous Scouts Special Branch were alone responsible. As far as McGuinness was aware, Special Branch Selous Scouts was only involved in ballot box stuffing to swell the Muzorewa vote. The said rogue elements, assisted by some South African Special Forces personnel operating in Rhodesia, carried out all the other dirty tricks during the campaign.

Lord Soames, in the meanwhile, in his usual pragmatic way, was able now to air the thought that even though there had been massive and widespread intimidation, in all probability none of it materially affected the outcome of the election. This was no doubt true. In the hours that followed the result, however, thousands of homes went on the market, and an exodus of whites quickly gathered momentum. In a combined broadcast to the nation, in the meanwhile, Governor Soames was the first to have his say.

"This is a solemn hour for Zimbabwe", he intoned, airing that loved and hated name for the first time in a public forum. "There must be no violent action or reaction of any kind…my purpose is to bring about an orderly transfer of power to a stable government.' Walls, it appeared, held the same purpose. He spoke in a voice crisp and business-like, containing no hint of bitterness. 'I appeal to you all for calm, for peace".

And then it was Mugabe's turn and as he spoke the nation held its breath. "Let us join together", he began, "Let us show respect for the winners and losers." At that he paused for a moment, perhaps swallowing a lump in his throat before he continued. "There is no intention on our part to victimise the minority. We will ensure that there is a place for everyone in this country. I want a broadly based government to include whites and Nkomo."

With that said, the Prime Minister-elect went on to allay white fears. He promised the business community that there would be no sweeping nationalisation, civil servants that their pensions and jobs would be guaranteed and homeowners and farmers that their property rights would be respected. This speech left a deep impression on his white listeners. As it began to appear that he was intent on keeping his promises, such as maintaining certain white ministers and asking Peter Walls to oversee the integration of the army, whites began to allow a residue of hope to slip into their view of the future. Many white homes were taken off the market,

resignations were reconsidered and the time-honoured ‘wait and see’ attitude was re-adopted.

As this was going on, Ian Smith received an unexpected invitation to visit the ZANU-PF leader and Prime Minister-designate at his Mount Pleasant home. Smith was naturally apprehensive as he was driven to the meeting but was pleasantly surprised at how cordially he was received by his enemy. Perhaps Smith was reminded then of his rugby analogy – that according to the rules, one tackles not only friends but enemies too, and then shakes their hands at the end of the game.

Mugabe was business-like and came straight to the point. He was quick to acknowledge that he and his people were extremely fortunate to inherit the Jewel of Africa, with its sophisticated infrastructure and its status as the breadbasket of the region, and in order to maintain this position, a lesson ought to be learned from Mozambique: namely that it was vital that the skills base, whites, in other words, be encouraged to stay and participate in the new nation. He further stressed that although changes would have to be made, he and his people were sufficiently pragmatic to accept that the economic structure of Rhodesia was capitalist and that those changes would be gradual. When asked for his comments, all Smith could muster was to advise Mugabe to moderate his image as a Marxist in the interest of soothing not only the fears of the local whites but also those of Western investors. Mugabe agreed, and the two parted, Smith probably wondering whether he had been the victim of some waking hallucination.

In the days that followed, Ian Smith was able to indulge himself in some hollow humour as, at various times, all the other black leaders visited him and pleaded with him to lead the way in somehow overturning the result. Smith shrugged. It was their party now, he told them, but if they could approach the military and gain some support from that quarter, some action might still be possible. He did not believe it, of course, and nor did anybody else. The game was over, and Mugabe had won. Blacks were in substantive control for the first time in almost a century, and the maShona coalition was the strongest. Smith called on Mugabe one more time when such banalities as Cabinet positions and future government structures regarding whites were discussed. A general agreement was reached to let bygones be bygones and for both races to unite as best they could. Upon this rather unlikely notion, the two parted on apparently reasonable terms.

Somewhat late in the day, South Africa woke up suddenly to the unpalatable truth that they were now strangers in a Marxist neighbourhood. As the Prime Minister-elect waited for the moment of his ceremonial inauguration, the well of dirty tricks did not run dry but was simply shifted south by hard-line Rhodesian Security Force operators. There it fell under the aegis of South African Special Operations, at which point things became more desperate and dirtier still. Immediately after the election results were announced, a meeting of the State Security Council declared Messina a SADF operational area, and the South African Defence Force's powerful Battle Group Charlie assembled with its 102 armoured cars and heavy weaponry.

Central to every plan was the killing of Robert Mugabe. The latest plan, however, was breathtakingly audacious and went far beyond the removal of Mugabe alone, calling also for the assassination of the heir to the British throne, Prince Charles, who was to represent the Crown at the handover, the Governor Lord Soames and his wife, and possibly Lord Peter Carrington if he got in the way. The idea was to ambush the official motorcade between Government House and Meikles Hotel, where a ZANU reception was planned just hours before the ceremony of 17 April that would mark the inauguration of the new state. In terms of logistics, a series of powerful explosive charges would be secreted in containers made to resemble traffic light control boxes. These were to be positioned by the side of the road along the route to be taken by the motorcade. South African or rogue Selous Scouts operatives, positioned on an adjacent rooftop, would detonate the devices, doing any necessary finishing off with sniper rifles.

Clearly, the ramifications of such a plan succeeding would have been very severe. It was predicted that the massive euphoria created among black Zimbabweans would be converted to mass rage when their hero was snatched from them at the eleventh hour. A belief would naturally permeate the crowd that somehow the whites had been involved, and no doubt Rufaro Stadium would empty of a vast mob on the rampage. The angry phalanx would surge into the townships and gather pace and substance as it moved up to the northern suburbs. There, it was predicted, bloody revenge would be wrought on the whites, and hundreds, if not thousands would be slaughtered out of hand.

Of course, a deafening international outcry would be raised against the high profile assassinations and the consequent civilian carnage. With the

Rhodesian security machine disassembled, the guerrilla armies complicit and the Monitoring Force too weak to intervene there would be nothing for it but for South Africa to launch Battle Group Charlie across the border on humanitarian grounds. Pretoria would then take direct control of the situation and be responsible for all important political and security force appointments. They would then effectively be running the country.

Word once again leaked, and Chief Superintendent Mac McGuinness got wind of the grand assassination attempt. He passed the information on to the CIO which immediately went into action. Word quickly made its way back, and the local Selous Scouts crew promptly cleared their safe house of any incriminating evidence and decamped. A small arsenal was loaded onto a pickup, which was driven out of town and abandoned on the side of the Salisbury-Bulawayo road. The plotters were probably picked up there by a light aircraft and flown to South Africa. No subsequent arrests were made.

29
The Independence Celebration

Every man gotta right to decide his own destiny, And in this judgement there is no partiality – **Bob Marley**

By now Mugabe was at the end of his tether, and needless to say, rigorous security precautions were now in place. Nonetheless, the handover of Rhodesia to an independent government was proving to be something of an international jamboree, with dignitaries arriving from all over the world. This was Mugabe's coming out, and these were the most important days of his life. Truly a Moses, he had led his people to freedom, and now he was to receive the Promised Land, and he intended to live to savour the moment.

One of the first to arrive in the country was Jamaican reggae legend, Bob Marley. Marley and his band, the Wailers, had been invited by the organisers to entertain the crowd at Rufaro Stadium, and they were met at the airport by an army of press photographers and television cameras. Few in conservative white Rhodesia had ever heard of Bob Marley, let alone hummed his liberation anthem 'Zimbabwe'. Things had really gone to the dogs when a scruffy little *munt* wearing a tea cosy on his head was treated like royalty and featured as the headline story on the evening news. 'Bob Marley and the Wailers', however, had a catchy ring, and it was not long before it was adapted and adopted to express white distaste at Mugabe's ostentatious motorcade, with its robust security detail and at least a dozen screaming police sirens. For years afterwards, the sound was met with a chuckle and a reference to 'Bob Mugabe and the Wailers'.

On the 17 April, a day before the inauguration, Salisbury airport became a hub of unprecedented international air traffic. The first to step onto the tarmac was UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, followed by the heads of state and representatives of ninety-six nations. Botswanan President Sir Seretse Khama was the first of the Frontline leaders to land, his chartered jet escorted in by a Rhodesian Air Force guard of honour. He was met on the red carpet by both Mugabe and president-in-waiting Canaan Banana. Kenneth Kaunda was the next to arrive, although there was a noticeable chill in Mugabe's greeting of his old antagonist.

Kaunda, indeed, would not be favoured with a great deal of attention during the proceedings, and nor would his name be conspicuously honoured

by the revolution. When the day came that the prominent metropolitan thoroughfares of Queensway and Jameson Avenue in Salisbury were renamed Julius Nyerere Way and Samora Machel Avenue, Kaunda was thrown the sop of a lesser avenue in a more seedy railway quarter of Salisbury.

Nonetheless, a busy day of junketing and diplomatic flourishes was finished off when the principal guest, HRH Prince Charles, flew into the country. He joined the Governor and his wife on the lawns of Government House to witness the final beating of the retreat and the lowering of the Union Jack, before attending a brief Governor's reception. Neither Smith nor Mugabe put in an appearance, which was perhaps for the best. Although senior members of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress were invited, no official representative of the South African Government was present at all.

By 19h30, the grounds of Government House were emptied as invited guests made their way to the Meikles Hotel for a state banquet, to be hosted by the Reverend Canaan Banana. Mugabe attended, but he was in sober mood. He had driven to the hotel by a secret route, and he left early, and equally secretively, to return to his Quorn Avenue residence. There he dressed and prepared himself for what would arguably be the climax of his life.

Senior party official Emerson Mnangagwa and CIO member Danny Stannard were jointly charged with the sensitive details of Mugabe's security. It was decided that the ZANU chief's motorcade would make its way to Rufaro Stadium without him, while Mugabe himself would travel by a circuitous route in a small police convoy, meeting up with the motorcade at the gates of the venue. Crowds had been gathering around Rufaro Stadium for most of the day, but with seating capacity limited to 30,000, many more than this milled around in the streets outside and agitated for access. A hushed mood of expectation was suddenly shattered as Bob Marley launched into his pop anthem 'Positive Vibration'.

Among whites, the sound stirred no particular emotions, but to blacks, the tempo struck a note of such pure liberty that violence was the only outlet. The thousands of would-be spectators who were locked out began to beat on the doors, and the mood grew ugly. A quarter of an hour into the concert the band was silenced as riot police moved in with tear gas and dogs to disperse the mob. Order inside the stadium was restored by a

ZANLA formation marching across the field with raised fists. A moment later, Marley retook the stage and greeted the ZANLA men with a raised fist of his own, and a cry of 'Freedom!' The crowd roared, the band struck up again, and the sounds of Marley's epic 'War' echoed across Salisbury.

Then, at precisely 23h00, the official motorcade pulled up at the stadium doors, where Mugabe was quickly ushered from the unmarked police car into his official vehicle. Behind the pilot car rode Prince Charles in an open-top Rolls Royce, until then the official vehicle of the Governor. The entourage was joined by a mounted escort of the BSAP in full dress with whitened helmets and lances. A combined ZIPRA, ZANLA and Air Force choir took up the haunting strains of *Nkosi Sikelela Africa*, the unofficial anthem of southern African liberation movements. Already thoroughly warmed up by Bob Marley, the crowd was euphoric, and lined up in ranks on the field was the guard of honour made up of the 1st Battalion Rhodesian African Rifles under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Mick McKenna.

Prince Charles, in his Royal Navy uniform, was led up to the podium where he delivered a message of goodwill from his mother, Queen Elizabeth. Charles bade a warm valediction to the colony of Rhodesia and welcomed Zimbabwe as the forty-third member of the Commonwealth. The Reverend Canaan Banana was sworn in as the first president, and he, in turn, took Robert Mugabe's oath as the nation's first prime minister. Banana was then handed the constitutional instruments of a free Zimbabwe. "We now enter a new era of international acceptability", he said, "following our long hard-fought battle for freedom and independence."

At midnight on 18 April 1980, a lone bugler sounded the last post, and the Union Jack was lowered for the last time on the continent, to be replaced by the revolutionary colours of the fiftieth free state of Africa. Then, to thunderous applause, Mugabe stepped forward to light an eternal flame in honour of the fallen heroes. Lord Carrington read a warm and fraternal message to the nation, welcoming Robert Mugabe into the exclusive club of international statesmen. With tongue in cheek, Mugabe thanked Margaret Thatcher for the decisive role she had played in the vital final quarter. He then read his address to the nation.

> The people of Zimbabwe must strive to unite themselves … intellectually and spiritually, to the reality of political change and

> relate to each other as brothers bound to one another by a bond of national comradeship…if yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and an ally with the same national interests, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds me to you and you to me.

Before disappearing into history, Rhodesia reserved the last word for herself. It was a bitter little jibe, but cuttingly to the point, and aptly delivered. A flyover of a single Canberra bomber concluded the official ceremony. At the controls was a white Rhodesian pilot, and as he approached the stadium, he opened doors of the bomb bay. The Canberra was configured so that the slipstream created by the open doors caused an otherworldly howl that was all too familiar to those who had been bombed by the old warhorse. The RAR, who never had, kept their ranks, but the ZIPRA and ZANLA men on the field and in the stands dived for cover.

In the meanwhile, in bars and private homes throughout the country, whites watched the unfolding events on television or listened to the ceremony on the radio. The voice of the apparently humble ex-schoolteacher rang across the nation and declared a new era of hope. Many young white men of fighting age drowned their sorrows and remembered friends and comrades who had fallen along the way. There was certainly no glory in this defeat, no sympathy and no refuge. The war was discredited, and the losers had received their just deserts. While many regular and irregular servicemen stayed to give Mugabe and the new order the benefit of the doubt, many more packed up and left.

Immediately after the elections, all members of the various territorial units were disarmed and sent home. This included all eight battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment, the territorial members of the Selous Scouts and the Rhodesia Defence Regiment. Likewise, the National Service independent companies were disarmed and disbanded, as was the Guard Force and the full spectrum of Security Force Auxiliaries. All the aircraft of the Rhodesian Air Force were recalled to the main bases of Thornhill in Gwelo and New Sarum in Salisbury to await the pleasure of the new military command.

On 1 November 1980, the Rhodesia Light Infantry disbanded as a unit. This last cut came long after the cream of its personnel had left the country. The few remaining officers and troops would assist in the

formation and training of the new Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). The famous RLI 'Troopie' statue was smuggled out of the country along with other treasures of the regiment, while the regimental colours were hung in the Anglican Cathedral in Salisbury. The Rhodesia African Rifles was disbanded soon after independence and, with somewhat less trauma, integrated into 1, 3 and 4 Brigades of the Zimbabwe National Army.

The SAS was withdrawn from the field and confined to barracks at the Kabrit Base, although by April 1980, the majority had followed Lieutenant-Colonel Garth Barrett to South Africa, where they reformed as 6 Recce Commando. On 31 December 1980, the unit was disbanded entirely. It died wholly and cleanly without the indignity of integration. At a ceremony on 13 December, the unit was addressed by its last Commanding Officer, Major Graham Wilson, incidentally the most decorated member of the Security Forces, who spoke to the remainder of his troops for the last time. 'We will leave here not only in sorrow but filled with pride, dignity and honour in ourselves and in 1 SAS. We have much to be grateful for.'

The Selous Scouts – Cain to the SAS's Abel – did not so much disband as merely fade away. As the news filtered out that Mugabe had won the election, the regiment imploded with the exodus of all of its many irregulars. As Colonel Ron Reid Daly lamented, the mud that had continually been thrown at the regiment had begun to stick. By then few in the establishment wanted any more to do with it. Those in the field were brought in, the peripheral bases were shut down and the regulars confined to the fort at Inkomo Barracks. 'Turned' guerrillas were now largely stranded, and of course had much to fear. Many white operatives followed the surviving C Squadron SAS members to South Africa where they were absorbed into the Recce Commandos.

As the dust settled and the fanfare subsided, foreign dignitaries wound up their visits and trooped back to the airport. Mugabe named his new cabinet and took up occupation of Government House. Whites who were prepared to give it a chance settled in, while those that once swore they would never leave, did. Blacks, of course, basked long in the afterglow of liberation, as the curtain finally fell on 90 years of white rule, and Rhodesia was no more.

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[1] Macequece, or Massi Kessi, was a small Portuguese garrison fort located on the outskirts of what is now the city of Mutare in eastern Zimbabwe.

[2] *Pole and Dagga,* meaning a circular, wattle and daub style construction under a thatched roof.

[3] Samkange Archives, quoted Terence Ranger, Are We Not Also Men? P 7/8

[4] Charles Coghlan died on 28 August 1927 of a cerebral hemorrhage

[5] In 1927 a black miners strike took place in Shamva

[6] The Subversive Activities Act of 1950 came about as a consequence of a commission of inquiry into the 1948 riots, which noted that no legal instruments existed to deal with civil unrest. It was followed in 1955 by the Public Order Act, in 1959 by the Unlawful Organizations and Preventative Detention Acts of 1959 and the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1960

[7] Figures quoted: Franck, Thomas M. *Race and Nationalism*, (Fordham University Press, New York, 1960), p65

[8] On 3 February 1960, Harold Macmillan address the South African Parliament in Cape Town and delivered an historically important speech containing the words: ‘The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.’

[9] The **Profumo Affair** was the 1963 political/sexual scandal that involved the then Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, and Christine Keeler. The scandal forced Profumo to resign and severely damaged the reputation of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's government.

[10] These provisions were known as the ‘Five Points’, and they were: Salisbury would accept majority rule within two years. Salisbury would meet immediately with nationalist leaders at a conference to organize an interim government. The interim government would consist of two bodies

and a Council of State would consist half of blacks, half of whites, with a white chairman with no casting vote. Functions would include passing legislation and supervising the drafting of the new constitution. The Council of Ministers would be the executive branch of the interim government and have a black majority and a black first minister. Decisions would be taken by a two-thirds majority. The UK and Salisbury would both enact the necessary legislation to give effect to the interim government. Upon establishment of the interim government, sanctions would be lifted and all guerrilla violence would cease.

[11] By then, Special Branch operated in two mutually antagonistic factions, the first configured along traditional lines and the second allied specifically to the Selous Scouts. The later came to be known as ‘Special Branch Selous Scouts’.